

SIKHISM

ISSUES AND INSTITUTIONS

(In the context of Dr. W.H. Mcleod, Dr. Pashaura Singh, Dr.
H.S. Oberoi and the likes ...)

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CONTENTS

1.	An Assessment of Dr. W.H. Mcleod with special reference to his book 'Who is a Sikh'?	1
2.	A Commentary on Dr. Pashaura Singh's Ph.D. thesis titled 'The Text and Meaning of Adi Granth'.	56
3.	An Academic Scrutiny of Dr. Harjot Singh Oberoi's Book, 'The Construction of Religious Boundaries'.	71
4.	An Examination of Irresponsible Statements on Sikh Polity.	90
5.	Address of the General President of the 67th Session, of Indian Philosophical Congress held at Trivandrum (India) 8-10, January, 1993.	98
6.	A Sikh Perspective on Temporal and Spiritual (Concept of meeri - peeri)	127
	<i>Index</i>	147

ONE

At the time of appearance of Guru Nanak, (1469 A.D., the founder of Sikhism) on the Indian scene there were three clearly marked religious identities, viz. Hindus, Nath Yogis and Muslims. Nath Yogis belonged to such a sect which actually symbolised the heterogeneous tendencies in the larger set-up of Indian people. A dissent within the body of classical Hinduism grew in the name of Carvak, Jainism, Buddhism along with its various branches which in the process of history came to be known as Sidh, Nath Yogi, Kanphathe etc. They, in a number of ways, differed with the classical Hinduism. Their perception of God, their attitude towards the Hindu institutions, their method for achieving emancipation and their intense dislike for dividing the society on caste basis were contrary to the classical Hindu mind. It is because of this fact that many people, along with Hindus, from Dalits and Muslims also joined their rank and file. This was truly a meeting ground for Hindus and Muslims and in itself a revolutionary step. But, unfortunately, because of its weak doctrinal base, resulting into almost no social commitment, they grew up into a group of escapists, who were fascinated to enjoy the ecstasy and bliss resulting from smadhi (trance) in secluded places. The craze for personal bliss and personal emancipation became their marked feature.

In terms of lack of social responsibility, Hindu and Muslim leaders, both, were sailing in the same boat. The personal interests were dearer to both of them. In fact, the society on the whole was reduced to the sense of demission. The Muslims were suffering from the vanity of a victor, whereas, the Hindus were suffering

An Assessment of Dr. W.H. Mcleod with special reference to his book 'Who is a Sikh' ?

- * The page numbers which I have given throughout, mean page numbers of the book "Who is a Sikh?"

from the psyche of a vanquished. The Nath Yogis were crazy for entering into the bliss of peace, thereby, isolating themselves from the social reality. The society on the other hand was in deep crisis.¹ Politically it was partial and self-aggrandizing. Social justice, security and civil liberties were out of question.² The freedom of worship, speech and the individual's dignity and their right to life were assailed at will. Socially the life had almost crumbled down.³ Even social institutions or relations were brought in the commercial market.⁴

The religious institutions, which were actually the source of bliss were reduced to hypocrisy. There was a distinctively noticeable difference between word and deed.⁵ The mutual conflicts between the Hindus and Muslims were polluting the minds of both the communities. The sense of mutual incompatibility was so strong that a Muslim would treat a Hindu, with typical contempt, as Kafir (non believer) and a Hindu, on the other hand, would treat a Musalman, as malechh (impure). The victor was religiously aggressive, self-elevating and intolerant to any kind of dissent. Whereas, the vanquished was meek, coward and submissive. In fact, none tried to find out a meeting ground for both the communities. The rise of the Yogis' organisations was, in fact, an answer to this problem. Initially it worked too, but because of their weak foundation, they could not work for and bring about the desired change. Instead, they themselves got lost in the vacuum in their search for peace and tranquility.

Guru Nanak is of the opinion that all the three communities, Hindus, Muslims and Yogis, no doubt had their leaders who were enjoying the privileges of leadership. But they had exhausted their possibilities and now, they were absolutely unconcerned about the fate of the people, even of their own people. Instead of mitigating the suffering of the people, from their respective communities, they themselves were eating into their vitals. Guru Nanak says :

Kazi (Muslim priest) tells lies and thus eats filth. Brahman (Hindu priest) takes bath (for purity) but kills life, Yogi does not know the right path and thus is blind. AH the three are like a fence which itself eats up crops.

S.G.G.S., M.I., p.662

In such a situation, there was no ground to believe that Guru Nanak could side with or be party to one or another group or community. His detestation regarding the given reality of all the three groups is given in detail in his bani (compositions). Therefore, his pronouncement is very significant. His famous saying is, 'there is neither a Hindu nor a Musalman', then why should he be a part of the either ? The lack of social responsibility was the actual problem with all the three groups. When Guru Nanak himself decried it, how could he join anyone of the given groups or make his preference for one or another ? This pronouncement that a Sikh is neither a Hindu nor a Musalman is further confirmed by fifth Nanak, Guru Arjun in unambiguous terms when he says :

We are neither Hindu, nor Musalman.

S.G.G.S.,M.5, p.1136

Even then, if such a claim is made by some western authors and their academic allies in India, about Guru Nanak's relationship with Hinduism, let us examine this proposition taking help from the contexts of the *bani* of Guru Nanak :

1. Hindus do not conform to the worship of one God. They had a large number of gods. Even non-believers were part of the Hindu body. Guru Nanak did not accept this and instead preached for one God.
2. Hindus were idol worshippers. They were allowed to worship stones, tombs and idols of their deities. Guru Nanak preached for formless and omnipresent God. No one in any form, whether living or non-living, can be the altar of worship in Sikhism.
3. Hindus had a number of ways to worship the deity. In fact each of their sections had its personal deity and also personal way to worship. Guru Nanak preached for one and uniform technique of Nam Simran (remembering the God) loving and being one with Him. In fact, he did not have a concept and practice of worship like the Hindus had.
4. Hindus have complicated way of religious life, like perceptions of pure impure (days, persons, places, dress, occasions etc.), wearing of forehead mark, sacred thread,

chanting of particular hymns for a particular occasion etc. On the other hand, Guru Nanak pleads that everything belongs to God, therefore, everything is pure. He simplified the cultural milieu and thus preached for a simple, pure and natural way of life; in thinking, in speaking and in deeds.

5. Hindus had a number of sacred scriptures, gods, prophets, places of pilgrimage etc. Whereas Sikhs have one scripture (Sri Guru Granth Sahib), one prophet (Guru Nanak), one central place of pilgrimage (Harmandir Sahib) and an integrated way of life.
6. Guru Nanak, unlike Hindus, eliminated the concept of divine status of a priest. The priest was no more a mediator, an interpreter between Guru/God and his Sikh. A Sikh had a direct and personal relationship with his deity.
7. Hindus believed in caste system and Varan Ashram. A woman and so-called low caste were not allowed to enter the doors of religion. *Sanyas* was praised. The problem was that these people were authenticated by their scriptures. Guru Nanak strongly preached about removing these barriers.
8. On the whole Guru Nanak attempted at building an - alternate culture. He was born of a Hindu family, but he refused to follow Hindu ways in his religious, social and cultural life. He wilfully parted company with his ancestors' perception of life.

In such a situation, it is impossible to prove that religion of Guru Nanak is, in any way, an extension of Hinduism or a sect of Hinduism or Islam or a reconciliation between the two. Still, there is somewhere, something which misleads some scholars to believe so. It is primarily due to the fact that Sikhs are the product of same social soil sharing the same heritage. But, this issue is largely misunderstood by this section of scholars. They are misled by Guru Nanak's usage of the same vocabulary. This has become the main cause of misunderstanding. Communication is the most urgent problem and priority of Guru Nanak.⁶ He had to address

the people (Sangat) who were familiar with this mode of communication. He had to convey himself through their idiom which they could easily understand. Therefore, he freely and frequently makes use of the words, taken from the scriptures of Hindus, Muslims and Yogis. But, he does not accept their original meaning. He gave them new meaning. Thus he accepted the words and men and changed the inner core of the both. Thus, Guru Nanak re-interpreted his heritage and had an entirely new structure.

As for the attitude of Guru Nanak towards both the communities was concerned, it was exactly the same. A number of scholars of the 17th to 19th century have recorded their opinions about relationship between Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims. First of all, Guru Nanak himself speaks about it. Then Guru Arjun Dev wrote about it. Then, Bhai Gurdas and a number of scholars till today have spoken about this relationship. :

Muslims and Hindus are on two different ways. They meditate upon the name of Ram and Rahim, still are ego-centrics.

Mecca, Ganj Banaras are their places of pilgrimage and **worship**.

They fast (Roza, Vrat), conduct Namaz and prostration (Dandot).

Gursikhs do not cut hair (do not follow both the ways) and surrender themselves only to Guru.

Bhai Gurdas Var - 38

- Since when, the reality is unveiled

How does it matter, whether it is about a Hindu or a Turk.

Chaubis Avtar p. 19

Khalsa should remain different than Hindus and Muslims.

Rahat Nama Bhai Choupa Singh

Khalsa should not fear Hindus and Muslims.

Rahat Nama Bhai Daya Singh

Then (Khalsa is) different than Hindus and Turks. This panth of the brave is unbound.

Panth Parkash

While answering the question of Nadir Shah about the identification of the Sikhs, the Subedar of Lahore details

a number of points on which Khalsa differs from Hindus and Muslims, some of them are : Their life is of wholesome good. They are different than Hindus and Muslims. They treat their religion better than those of other's. They are irritated if someone calls them Hindu.

In the face of such a clearly recorded, scriptural and historical evidence, how any sane person, much less a scholar, can say that Guru Nanak or his followers were Hindus, Muslims or Yogis. This cannot be a case of ignorance or mis-perception. Actually it is a case of academic casualness. Let those, who claim to hold this point of view, search for the academic worth of their claim.

In the first Pauri of Japuji Sahib, the first *bani* of Guru Nanak Sahib, Guru Nanak, lays down the objectives of the life of a Sikh. A Sikh according to him must not look after his personal gains whether they are material or spiritual. He must rise above all personal considerations. Therefore, his main objective is neither to grab wealth nor power and nor the luxury of paradise after death. He has to attain the status of an emancipated soul in the very present life. He has to be a *Sachiar*, a truthful living person, now and here. *Sachiar*, according to Guru Nanak, is one who identifies himself with the given cosmic/natural laws (Hukam), like :

- 1 He has to adopt a strictly pro-human attitude because nature gives birth to an individual and not to a Hindu (Brahman, Khatri, Vaish, Sudra etc.), Christian, Muslim or a Sikh. Even the men and women are not different from each other. Guru Nanak spoke of their natural bisexual-ity.⁷ Therefore, dividing barriers are created by man and hence they are unnatural and false.

- 2 Everything that nature provides for eating, drinking (water, milk etc.) and dressing is pure. Therefore, whatever nature gives for eating/drinking and it does not disturb the mental and physical health of an individual, is permissible for consumption. Ali fads about food and dress are unnatural and, therefore, are uncalled for.

- 3 All social relations should be based upon pure emotions provided by the nature. Wickedness, selfishness and

commercial attitude in social relations is unnatural and, therefore, in the given real context, are deplorable.

4. The state should frame its policies and laws in accordance with the laws of nature. Therefore, freedom of worship, speech and right to work and live are the fundamental rights and they must be available to each individual without any prejudice. Thus, living in tune with natural principles (Hukam) and complete submission to the will (Raza) of God are two fundamental principles of Sikhism.⁸ Everything else is done either to achieve this state of being or to implement this in practice in life.

5. Sikhism, since the days of Guru Nanak, insists upon keeping the soul and body intact and interdependent. First it has to be kept as natural and pure as is given by the nature. Therefore, Sikhism preaches, as a fundamental principle, not to remove (or colour) any hair from any part of the body. Second, the mind must be purified by constant and uninterrupted Nam Simran (Remembering the name of God) and body by early bath and wearing of clean clothes. Above all, a Sikh must have a truthful living, by resisting temptations of wealth and other mind-polluting luxuries. On the whole a Sikh is required to live as a wholesome being with completely harmonised inner and outer self as is given by God/nature.

Thus Guru Nanak sought to create a direct link between God/ nature and a Sikh. Guru and God are synonymous in Sikhism. Therefore, everything is between Guru and a Sikh. A Sikh directly inherits the power of Guru. He owns it in abundance. With this power he serves Guru/God/people and continuously struggles to keep the higher values of life intact.

This conviction of Guru Nanak is based upon a larger context. Thus, Sikhism believes that there is one and formless God. He is the sole creator, the sustainer and the demolisher of everything. All animate and inanimate things are created and sustained by Him and within Himself. All attributes are upto Him.

Because God is formless, thereby omnipresent. Therefore, there can be no god in human form. Thus, Sikhism rejects the

theory of Avtar (God descending upon earth in human form) and idol worship etc. In fact, Sikhism has no scope for ritualistic worship. They only intensively love God and remember His Name. This approach of Guru Nanak struck fatally at the centuries old ever increasing conflicts in the name and form of deity and mode of worship in different religions and sects. The idea of all embracing God actually takes away the very teeth of communal prejudices. Thus the allegation that religion divides does not apply to Sikhism. It has, in fact, eliminated the grounds on which the people were divided. On the basis of its ideology, it evolved a functional structure which unites the already divided.

God has created this universe. It consists of uncountable number of solar systems like the one in which we live. Each solar system is again infinite. Thus, the part and the whole, both are incomprehensible for a human being. This is an answer to the theories of celebrities even in modern science.

Thus, our solar system consists of a number of earths, skies and spaces. Our earth is a small part of the whole solar system.⁹ There is an innumerable variety of life on this earth. Life is in water, in plants, in grains, in soil and in space. This whole variety is the colour and beauty of this earth. This colour and beauty and also being inter-linked has a social implication for us. Principle of co-existence and mutual acceptance, to which Sikhism is committed, springs out of this existential reality. The society has to be plural because nature has planned it so.

This earth, according to Guru Nanak, is a *Dharam Sal*, a labotary where the religiosity of a person has to be tested. In other words, an individual has to merit his being as a human-being.

One has the right to engage in affairs, but one has no right to deviate from the principles of ethics which nature has provided us. This means, the discipline and freedom (from cynicism, superstition, narrow consideration and slavery), are an integral part of mis grand cosmic design and have to be accepted and enjoyed simultaneously by every individual. An individual must open his mind to the extent, nature has made it for this purpose. The heritage of colour, beauty and grandeur has to be part of every individual's personality.

This inter-linking between grand cosmic design and each individual provides a fair ground for self-introspection. Second, it links one individual with another individual. The net gain of this line is that pleasures and pains are shared. The cry of an individual affects the whole cosmic order and thus gets the appropriate response.¹⁰ Once this process starts the vanity of being rich, the powerful, the beautiful, hence supreme explodes. The difference between rich and poor, ruler and ruled, master and servant, friend and foe, created by illusion fades away. Thus, this link proves to be a leveller.

Hence the need for starting the process of teaching comes in. Guru Nanak, therefore, gave a paradigm of a teacher (Guru) and a student (Sikh) to the people. His followers were Sikhs and God was their Guru. This relationship indicates the process of upward journey which a Sikh will have to undertake. This is a moment in which, by sitting at the feet of Guru, a person becomes a Sikh. Thus, those who sat around Guru Nanak became his followers, the *Sahjdhari* Sikhs. They put themselves in the process of learning, reflecting and serving the humanity through the vision given by Guru. They were not converted to Sikhism but they just became Sikhs. Guru only moulded and reshaped their psyche. They were no more suffering the ego of a victor, the helplessness of a vanquished and the indignity of a Dalit. They were Sikhs, having equal rights to sit and participate in the decision making process of the panth.

In order to explain and make his teachings effective, Guru Nanak tried to rationalise this situation in a very convincing and noble way. He teaches that worldly game is actually the game of mind. It is the mind which creates the hell and heaven both. Therefore, this mind must be brought under discipline without encroaching upon its liberty or system. In fact, according to him everything small or big, living or non-living in the given cosmic set-up is functioning under a given cosmic discipline :

hi (God's) fear (discipline) the air is ever blowing.
 hi fear the lacs of rivers are flowing,
 In fear the fire is burning.
 In fear the earth is bearing burden.
 hi fear the hid (cloud) is moving head down.
 In fear the king's courts are judicious.
 In fear is sun, in fear is moon,

Crores of miles they journey endlessly.
 In fear are perfect men, intellectuals, divines, Masters.
 In fear are hanging skies.
 In fear are the brave, the most powerful.
 In fear one is transmigrating by turn.
 Everyone's destiny is fear.
 Saith Nanak : only One, True, Formless is beyond fear.

S.G.G.S.M.I, p. 464

This discipline is must for the meaningful growth of an individual, a society, a system or an institution. Therefore, even the most powerful agent *i.e.* mind has to be disciplined. But it cannot be done by force or by severe penance. For this, Guru Nanak wants that the mind should be linked with spirit.¹¹ In case it is done, it produces Gurmukh the pure, the creation of a living soul. But, if it is linked with senses, through body, it produces *Manmukh*, the dictator, the devil, the tormentor. The success or failure of a person or of a system can be anticipated by observing the nature of this link.

Keeping this context in view, Guru Nanak redefines the nature of mind. He says that the mind is very subtle in substance and sophisticated in its reaction to the external reality. Its subtleness is understandable from the fact that it is the finest part of the matter of which it is made of.¹² And at the same time, the only concrete part of the spirit is mind. Thus, mind is the linking force, the abstract and the concrete, between the spirit and body of an individual and on the whole, of the cosmic set-up. In fact, this linking of mind with spirit is precisely the goal of Sikhism. At the time of baptising a Sikh with Amrit, this link between mind and spirit is strengthened. Therefore, in a Sikh, if this end is achieved, he has to be a victor in every situation. It is this confidence with which a Sikh functions and moves on the continuing journey of Sikhism.

The decoding of the above said praxis, gives us the following fundamental principles of Sikhism :

For a Sikh as an individual

1. To be attuned with Vaheguru (God) while meditating upon

the divine name.

2. To read gurbani (word of Guru) while reflecting upon the doctrines it imparts.
3. To serve selflessly, to love everyone as brothers, sisters without any prejudice of caste, colour and region.
4. To lead a life of the house-holder through honest earning.
5. To shun untouchability, witchery, idolatory and superstition which promote ignorance and thus live by the principles of Sikhism.

For a Sikh as a member of corporate body

1. To discipline oneself with the principles given by the organization (panth) and live strictly within the parameters of Sikh code of living.
2. To accept panth as Guru and to serve it through mind, body and wealth.
3. To spread the teachings of Guru in the world.
4. To love every Nanak Panthi, as they are part of Sikh religion, in any form or dress they may be and continuously pray for everyone's well-being.
5. To keep intact the Sikh code of living in every Gurudwara or a religious place.

(Mr. Mcleod has used the word 'rituals' for Maryada (code) knowing fully well that in Sikhism, there is no concept of ritual. Also please compare it with the translation offered by Mr. Mcleod on pp. 2-3).

The scriptures are translated into principles. The principles are illustrated in order to make them easy for common man's understanding and adoption. Thus, detailed principles are brought in concinnity, to make out a part of follower's memory and deed. Thus reducing an illustration into a catchword, and illustrating a catchword into detail, is the technique and process adopted by the scholars of all hues, particularly, of religious studies, the subject being very abstract and evasive. The Sikh scholars have also been doing all along so. In this process, they reduced the whole bulk of the teachings of Sikh Gurus into the catchwords :

This emphasis upon service gave a specified code of conduct of the Sikhs. This code is expressed through three words viz. to work with own hands (Kirt karna)} to meditate upon the name of God (Naam japna) and to share the earnings with others (Vand shakna) especially, with those who are in need. This involves a sort of labour to be put in simultaneously in the worldly as well as spiritual sphere. Neither of the two sides is to be ignored or over emphasised and also the fruits of the both are not exclusively one's own possession. Thus, through the institution of service and other allied institutions, Guru Sahib sought to create an equilibrium in society so that the consequences of being hungry or over fed are minimised*.

Sikhism means a process of divinity (Nirmal Panth). A Sikh has to rise above social and religious prejudices and the commercialization of human values and sentiments. Other things being valuable, this mass of human life is divided by Guru Nanak into three categories. This conceptual upward journey is brought into practice by creating a similar physical frame-work of Sikhism for being a Sikh. In this context, we have three types of Sikhs; signifying three stages of an awakened person :

1. Sahjdhari : One who lives in natural temperance.¹³
2. Kesadhari : One who lives in natural temperance and keeps the hair unshorn.
3. Amritdhari: One who lives in natural temperance, keeps unshorn hair and is baptised with *the Amrit* of Guru

The first category of the human being is those of natural beings. Such people live as they are born to live. They are simple, natural and integrated from within and without. Guru Nanak, about such people, says :

We live by breathing, but sure of only one breath.

Dhanasri m.l, p. 660

Dr. Darshan Singh, Japu Ji Sahib : Context and concerns of Guru Nanak Dev, P. 27.

A person is one who knows the art of availing time.

m.1, p. 84

This natural and pure human-being cannot continue as such. The compulsion of the situation is that empirical reality starts reflecting in them. As a result of this he/she either degrades or upgrades himself/herself. If it degrades it goes down below the level of a human being. Guru Nanak has written a full Pauri (Stanza) about such people. He says :

Innumerable are fools, totally blind.
 Innumerable are thieves and parasites.
 Innumerable are the rulers who rule by force.
 Innumerable are murderers who cut other's throat.
 Innumerable are sinners who die sinning.
 Innumerable are liars who live by lies.
 Innumerable are filthy who live by eating filth.
 Innumerable are slanderers who burden themselves by slandering others.

Nanak ponders over and speaks of the (above) condemned.
 It is not enough once to sacrifice myself (for the above purpose).

The best deed is one which pleases you.
 You are Formless and Eternal.

S.G.G.S. p. 6

If a person is graced by the kindness of Guru/God and is put on the right path, he takes an upward journey. Guru Nanak has written about such people in his Japuji Sahib :

Innumerable are absorbed in repeating (Name of God).
 Innumerable are in attachment.
 Innumerable are in worship.
 Innumerable are in penance.
 Innumerable recite the text of Vedas.
 Innumerable are detached Yogis.
 Innumerable devotees are reflecting upon (His) attributes and knowledge.
 Innumerable are men of character and bounty.
 Innumerable are the brave who face the brunt.

Innumerable are in tune (with God), through silence.
 How I can reflect upon and describe this creation !
 It is not enough once to sacrifice myself (for the above
 purpose).
 The best deed is one which pleases you.
 You are Formless and Eternal.

Pauri-XVI, p. 6

From here the process of regulated journey starts. This is a step for springing forth a person out of the second category and putting it on the choosen path of upward journey. It was the concern of Guru Nanak.

Thus Sahjdhari was a Sikh who had stepped in the path to divinity. He was an awakened soul. Therefore, he was already a Sikh even while living in his earlier faith. Guru Nanak introduced him to his system mainly through two principles. These principles are equality and freedom, from within and without, for all. These two principles are mutually linked. Therefore, interdependent and supporting each other. It was because, the nature has placed every individual with these facilities. Therefore, he worked out a plan and called upon the people to come forward and join him in such steps as were necessary, in the given situation, to achieve these two objectives. The sensitive and awakened souls who were already present in the three communities — Hindus, Muslims and Dalits — responded to his call and joined him to intitiate the process of emancipation. It is important to note that they were not converted to Sikhism. Even now, like in the past, people are not converted to Sikhism, they simply become Sikhs. Thus those who joined Guru Nanak became his first followers and the first group of Sikhs.

Guru Nanak himself defines Sikhism. He says, "Sikhi (Sikhism) consist in continuous learning and reflecting upon what is learnt".¹⁵ Thus continuous learning from Guru, books und self-experience is the founding principle of Sikhism. The second step is in giving reflection to whatever is learnt. At another place,¹⁶ Guru Nanak has said that the process of learning must be combined with two other steps. One that the process of reflection upon whatever is learnt be kept alive and second that the results of learning and reflecting should be submitted to the well-being of all. Thus,

according to Guru Nanak these three are the founding principles of Sikhism.

The above stated principles are fundamental to every Sikh. Hence to a Sahjdhari also. The first Sikhs who assembled around Guru Nanak and were called *Sachiar* by Guru Ram **Das**,¹⁷ were actually Sahjdhari and Kesadhari both. Guru Nanak wanted his Sikhs to live according to the original laws of God enshrined in nature. Therefore, he advised them not to cut hair from any part of their body. Thus they became a Kesadhari who kept their hair unshorn. This Kesadhari phenomenon was added to the fundamental principles of Sikhism. Now a Sikh had to be faithful to the above said principles and keep his/her hair uncut. The basic principle of living in complete natural temperance remained untouched.

The onward march of Sikhism, thus starts from Guru Nanak and progressed without any active political hindrance from the State. Though the elite, in Hindus and Muslims both, sensing Guru's purely pro-human movement, saw in it a danger to their selfish ends and they did oppose it bitterly. They thought the indoctrinization and the awakening of their people would jeopardise their interests. They even tried to influence the State machinery into taking severe action against this fresh and full-blooded wave in order to minimise its influence. But, since the day of meeting of Guru Nanak and Babar (the first Mughal ruler) at Emnabad and their mutual understanding, the rulers of Delhi continued to seek blessings of Babe Ke (house of Guru Nanak). Though Guru Nanak unhesitatingly criticised Babar, lamented the vast destruction of men and material and called Babar a blood-thirsty, the messenger of death,¹⁸ yet Babar accepted his view-point and accordingly planned his state policy. Even after such an understanding and positive response from Babar Ke (house of Babar), Guru Nanak and his successors continued to scrutinise state's actions. The House of Guru Nanak never compromised with inhuman attitude of the State. This principled stand did not attract State's wrath. It is only during the period of Guru Arjun, when Jahangir came to occupy the throne with the help of Muslim fundamentalist forces, this policy was reversed. Despite the wishes of his fattier

according to Guru Nanak these three are the founding principles of Sikhism.

The above stated principles are fundamental to every Sikh. Hence to a Sahjdhari also. The first Sikhs who assembled around Guru Nanak and were called *Sachiar* by Guru Ram Das,¹⁷ were actually Sahjdhari and Kesadhari both. Guru Nanak wanted his Sikhs to live according to the original laws of God enshrined in nature. Therefore, he advised them not to cut hair from any part of their body. Thus they became a Kesadhari who kept their hair unshorn. This Kesadhari phenomenon was added to the fundamental principles of Sikhism. Now a Sikh had to be faithful to the above said principles and keep his/her hair uncut. The basic principle of living in complete natural temperance remained untouched.

The onward march of Sikhism, thus starts from Guru Nanak and progressed without any active political hindrance from the State. Though the elite, in Hindus and Muslims both, sensing Guru's purely pro-human movement, saw in it a danger to their selfish ends and they did oppose it bitterly. They thought the indoctrinization and the awakening of their people would jeopardise their interests. They even tried to influence the State machinery into taking severe action against this fresh and full-blooded wave in order to minimise its influence. But, since the day of meeting of Guru Nanak and Babar (the first Mughal ruler) at Emnabad and their mutual understanding, the rulers of Delhi continued to seek blessings of Babe Ke (house of Guru Nanak). Though Guru Nanak unhesitatingly criticised Babar, lamented the vast destruction of men and material and called Babar a blood-thirsty, the messenger of death,¹⁸ yet Babar accepted his view-point and accordingly planned his state policy. Even after such an understanding and positive response from Babar Ke (house of Babar), Guru Nanak and his successors continued to scrutinise state's actions. The House of Guru Nanak never compromised with inhuman attitude of the State. This principled stand did not attract State's wrath. It is only during the period of Guru Arjun, when Jahangir came to occupy the throne with the help of Muslim fundamentalist forces, this policy was reversed. Despite the wishes of his fattier

In his case, another principle of keeping the hair intact, on the body, was added. This absolutely does not mean that Sahjdhari group of Sikhs ceased to exist. That group actually provided wider base for the growth of Sikhism. Out of this base the Kesadharis grew. Guru Nanak, when called upon the people to join his way for emancipation there was no ceremony or ritual for this purpose. But, he was clear about one thing and that he communicated frankly to the prospective Sikhs. He asked them to surrender their heads which meant they must be treated as dead for their earlier links and personal or family bonds. Second, they must not hesitate if called upon to fight against the tyrannical and oppressive advances. With this mental make-up they were introduced to Sikhism.

Clearly, there were two reasons which brought about the change in the policy and practice of Guru Hargobind. One that he and his Sikhs were committed to be on the side of the oppressed even at the cost of their life. Second, the external reality as stated above had changed. When Guru Arjun left Sri Amritsar for Lahore on his journey towards martyrdom, he advised his close lieutenants Bhai Gurdas and Baba Budha Jee, through a messenger, to see to it that young Hargobind was made to be prepared to face the approaching reality in a befitting manner.²¹ He anticipated that the time had come when they had to make a choice between the comfortable life and the principled life. The choice naturally fell on the second option.

In order to prepare the Panth for extending a suitable response to the changed external reality, Guru Hargobind took some steps which were meant for consolidating the effectiveness of his initiative. In this context, Dr. Mcleod, at page 24, observes, "Guru Hargobind had adopted a *new* policy", or "the other proclaimed and newly assumed temporal power (*meeri*)". This certainly is wrong. Guru Hargobind did not bring in any new policy. Guru Nanak laid down the basic principles of the panth and, as stated above, his successors absolutely did not, deviate from these principles. They only made use of these principles as and when the situation demanded. When Mcleod refers to Hargobind's policy as 'new policy' he means the policy of arming the Sikhs to fight against oppression. We know, Guru Nanak laid down this

policy in his *bani*, that :

1. His Sikhs should not compromise with evil which takes away individual's right to honourable life. In his view, the very food consumed for biological survival is poison if one's honour is compromised.²²
2. His Sikh is with the poor and oppressed. If any such person needs or comes in for protection, it is his duty to provide it. This has to be offered fearlessly and without any personal interests.

In the face of the changed policies of the State, Guru Hargobind was duty bound to act while remaining within the parameters of above stated policy of Guru Nanak. Guru Hargobind prepared his people, fought and won the battles against the oppressor. Therefore, it was absolutely not a new policy. The steps taken by Guru Hargobind were only incidental to the programme of implementation of the above said ever intact policy of Guru Nanak.

The second assumption of Mr. Mcleod which he terms as "newly assumed temporal power" is also wrong. As it has been explained, somewhere else, Guru Nanak pleaded for integrated view of wholesome and satisfying life. Life, according to him cannot be segregated into different units. Temporal concerns like economic, political, social and religious can never be separated from each other. Therefore, the assumption of temporal powers by Guru Hargobind was in no way anything new in the given paradigm of Sikhism. It was within the domain of his predecessors also.

Therefore, the donning of two swords is not 'symbolic' but actual, representing the actual concrete reality. It does not signify any shift in the policy. It was, in fact, the historical manifestation, rather assertion, of the laid down policy of the house of Guru Nanak. The institution of *Langar*, *Sangat*, *Pangat* and of 22 seats (Manjian) parallel to the 22 seats of the Central Government, are a living testimony to this effect. Promotion of the image of Guru as *Sacha Padshah* (true king) in contrast to the mundane king of Delhi clearly indicates that the combination and assumption of both, temporal and spiritual, was an essential part of the authority of Guru and it happened much before Guru Hargobind. Thus, it

was not something new but reiteration of the fact that Guru Hargobind's main concern was to ensure the implementation of the policies passed on to him by Guru Nanak. For the achievement of this goal, it became inevitable for him to arm his Sikhs. Indeed otherwise the right to honourable life could not be protected. The objectives and concerns thus remained the same. Only the use of the physical force was added to the moral force which was being used earlier for the fulfilment of the same objectives.

In order to translate the above stated policy of Guru Nanak into a concrete and historical institution Guru Hargobind took a few other steps also. One of them was the building of Sri Akal Takht. There is absolutely no confusion about the fact that it was raised by Guru Hargobind in the year 1608 A.D. But, even about these two facts Dr. Mcleod has doubts. He says, at page 24, "No one can be sure precisely when Akal Takht was first erected, but Sikh tradition insistently proclaims that it first appeared during the time of Guru Hargobind and that it has ever since been representing the same ideal as the doctrine of *meeri-peeri*". This clearly speaks of his mental make-up, resulting into hollowness of his hypothesis. Authoritative books of history and Sikh chronicles confirm these facts. If there is some difference of opinion about the date of the completion of Akal Takht it does not make any difference about the given subject, particularly, in the given wider and immediate context. The important thing is, its conceptual and physical framework and the role which it conceived and played in history.

Sri Akal Takht is constantly under discussion since the time of its inception. The arrival of Britishers had made this discussion more serious. A number of scholars have challenged its doctrinal base, constitutional existence and historical role. In the recent years this debate has taken a more serious turn. Sometimes it seems that a sinister mechanism, promoted by a number of agencies, is seriously concentrating upon this institution. Their objective seems to be to give a clear diversion to its total historical perspective.

The issue of unity of religion and politics in Sikhism is being treated by its critics as an erroneous interpretation of the fundamental principles of Sikhism. I think a close study of the *bani* of Guru Nanak leaves no one in doubt that the Sikh view of life, is

all encompassing and not religion or politics alone. Guru Nanak firmly believes and propogates that no aspect of life can be segregated from the total complex of life. A human life is a wholesome being which includes social, political religious, economic aspects of life to make it a whole life. None of it can be segregated, at any given time, particularly by those who plead for a satisfying life for each individual in every society.

This stand of Guru Nanak is in consonance with his fundamental view of life. He believes that the life-style of an individual and also its social and political relations should be determined in the perspective of natural/cosmic laws. The nature has produced an individual as a wholesome being. Accordingly his/her life can be more satisfying and hence comfortable. The process of segregation whether in individual life or social or political set-up is promoted by the vested interests, particularly the rulers, whose interests are otherwise. So, there is a clear demarcation between the two approaches. One is given by nature and another is offered by man, particularly a ruler. Sikhism opts for the first view of life. Therefore, it is against segregating any aspect of an individual's life from its wholesome being. The principle of unity of religion and politics, particularly in Sikhism, therefore, actually is a point which is deliberately being perceived from a narrow angle for the purpose of bringing it under debate. Keeping in view this background, those who opt for the state's point of view, actually tried to bring in its wholesome character a kind of dissection so that its inspiring uniqueness can be impaired, relegating it to the wasteful heap of the past.

Keeping in view the above *milieu* the seat of Akal Takht is brought under debate. The first point is made out that Akal Takht is a symbol and not a seat from where the instructions can be issued. Even then this point can be straightened. Akal Takht is a seat which symbolises a principle. Still, whether Akal Takht is a seat or a symbol of a seat, it matters little. The fact is that Akal Takht is an existing reality, a historical institution, which is given a role by the Guru to play. The role is to promote the wholesome concept of life. If we go into a little detail, we find that Akal Takht is the creation of the defiance against the

oppressive state orders. We know Jahangir, the ruler, issued a .lumber of orders aiming at dividing the society on communal lines, giving preferential treatment to the members of one religion over tile members of other religion. He also attempted at demoralising the non-Muslims, to the extreme. Through enacting certain laws they were clearly told that they had no right to an honourable civil life. They were humiliated and treated like an animal. Now this violation of human form did not fix in the ideological commitment of Sikh Gurus. Guru Hargobind, in this context and for upholding God's sanction of human rights, raised the voice of dissent against whatever was being attempted by the State through its unnatural laws. The state wanted a non-muslim not to raise any religious place, not to keep army, not to raise any fort, not to go for hunting, not to wear a particular type of turban, not to have beard, and not to possess a particular type of horse or weapon. Guru Hargobind did whatever was prohibited, pronouncing that it was his or everyone's birth right and no individual had the right to suppress it. Thus the raising of Akal Takht has a temporal context which symbolised life. If Delhi had a throne, Amritsar had a throne of God. It was a throne which symbolised the higher values of life. The higher values include the spiritual also. In fact, the temporal values here are given a spiritual base and thus are raised to the standard of higher values. Human action has been provided an amount of sanctity through the authority of Akal Takht.

Thus the raising of Akal Takht is not an attempt to separate the temporal from the spiritual, but it is an attempt to give a spiritual base to the temporal, thereby indicating that they are inseparable.

Thus Akal Takht does not, as stated at page 25, "represent the growing militancy of the panth". It actually represents an awareness and the resolve to withstand the oppression.

After donning two swords, Guru Hargobind started arming his Sikhs. So much so that through his *Hukam Namas* (Royal letters) he asked his Sikhs, far and near, to present him best horses, weapons and youth. The kind of regular military training was being imparted to the core, right in presence of Sri Akal Takht. Dr Mcleod has given a very strange twist to the whole affair. He has

drawn up a triangle here. He agrees that state was increasingly tyrannical and no self-respecting person could compromise with it. Only dead-wood, in the human form, could survive with it. Also, he agrees, though reluctantly, because he terms it 'traditional answer' or 'standard explanation', that Guru Hargobind initiated militarisation in order to face it (repression) boldly and to get it stopped. Reluctantly because, he terms this explanation, at page 25, "alone it remains inadequate". Therefore accepting the tyrannical character of the state and Guru's decision to oppose it, he turns to the third factor. This factor according to him is the 'Jat culture'. His claim, though incredible, that Jats had a culture of being militant. When they joined Sikhism they could not shed this character. Thus their militant character according to Mcleod was in fact responsible for arming Sikhs. Indirectly, he is suggesting that Guru Hargobind had no other option but to prepare them for fighting. Emanating from this, other arguments for him are 'traditional answer', p. 25, or 'standard explanation', p. 25.

This theory of reaction is very dear to **Mr.** Mcleod. Guru Hargobind started arming his Sikhs only as a reaction to entry of Jats into Sikh faith, similarly, Guru Gobind Singh created Khalsa only as a reaction to the misdeeds of Masands. Can this approach produce any academic worth?

In fact, throughout the Sikh history of the Guru period no action was taken and no decision was arrived at just out of reaction. **It** was a well conceived, well formulated and well aimed movement through which certain results were desired and obtained.

His intelligently clever mind makes a very subtle distinction on this issue. Whether it was a matter of policy against oppressive order or it was a circumstantial compulsion for the Guru, Mcleod's contention is that this step was the product of Jat culture, which means, circumstantial compulsion. Is Jat culture not the product of this policy ? He has simply put the cart before the horse.

He is determined to prove, though in vain, that doctrinal issues and the Sikh institutions throughout the history, are not the actual instruments which brought about a change in strategy.

Mr. Mcleod is master of many strange theories. One of them being the above stated. He says, at page 25, "In an informal sense

militant traditions were already well represented within the Panth and the Guru's change of policy served to harness these traditions to a developing need rather than introduce them for the first time. Contemporary circumstances thus encouraged a process whereby the traditions of a significant segment within the Panth increasingly became the acknowledged policy of the Panth as a whole."

The above quoted lines deserve the attention on three points. One he says that militant traditions were present in Sikhism right from the days of Guru Nanak. This is agreeable but with different factual position. Militancy was there earlier but not because of the entry of a particular section of people, but because of the ideological concerns of Guru Nanak. Second, he says that Guru Hargobind's policy served to harness these traditions to a developing need. This is a very interesting observation indeed. The actual position is that from the days of Babar's acceptance of Guru Nanak's point of view, the rulers of Delhi were fairly disposed towards its subjects till Jahangir came on the stage. Therefore, the relations between Babar-ke (the ruler) and Babe-ke (Gurus) remained cordial throughout this period. When Jahangir came to occupy the throne he changed the Government's policy from mutual tolerance and co-existence to a policy of oppression and submission by force. Even if the two houses were friendly, the Sikh Gurus, as a matter of doctrinal commitment, could not compromise with this attitude of the rulers. Therefore, it was not a question of harnessing the militant traditions, but it was a question of ideological commitment which was dearer to the Panth more even to their life. The third point Mcleod makes out is that the militant traditions existing already in the members of Panth (which he means the entry of Jats in the Panth) became the acknowledged policy of the Panth. This means the policy of defiance against oppression was not out of any ideological problem but it was because of the entry of the Jats in the Panth. Mcleod is trying to build a point as if Jats simply could not resist righting. He means that the adoption of militancy became a compulsion for the Guru. This is wrong on many accounts. If Jats were compulsive militants then the taking up of arms could have been before Guru Hargobind, because they were there in Panth since the

time of Guru Nanak. History of that time, does not recognize them as well-organized group of fighters. Then, it is no-where recorded that Jats left no option for the Guru but to fight. The list of the Sikhs from the time of Guru Nanak to Guru Hargobind recorded by Janam Sakhian, Bhai Gurdas in his Vars 24 and 26, Sikhian di Bhagat Mala, and the list of the generals²³ of Guru Hargobind speak contrary to the observation made by Mr. Mcleod. The fact remains that the Jats were a part of the Sikh Panth right from the days of Guru Nanak, they participated in the process of its successful growth, as a member of the Panth and not as Jats. This attempt at dividing the Panth into group loyalties is a very clever move started by motivated scholars and adopted by their faithful followers. I have no doubt, and history bears a testimony to it, that Guru Hargobind's decision to take up arms was actually an ideological manifestation. Panth had to make itself available for its ideological obligations.

Guru Nanak when asked his Sikhs to submit their heads before joining his Panth, it was also a call for waging war against the oppressive designs. Therefore, militant traditions were already there in the Panth. Surely not because of its Jat culture but because of the doctrinal base upon which the body of Sikhism was erected. Second, it is never the culture which produces an ideology. It is ideology which produces the culture.

It is now clear that Mcleod's emphasis is on external factor only whether from within or without. Whereas the truth is that it was (as is) the strength of doctrine, manifested through historical situation which determined the kind of instrument, moral or physical, to face the given reality.

Sikhs by nature are neither aggressive nor defiant. They are aggressive only in defence of their ideology. In this context, Guru Nanak's principle of moral strength and also of the resistant movement joined the issues with the rulers of Delhi.

Thus at the time of Guru Hargobind, Sikhs as a whole, came out into the battle-field. Under his leadership, Sikhs won all the battles they fought. This victory brought in the required moral exaltation. The very idea that such a well-organised, powerful and tyrannical state could be defeated, gave the Sikhs a kind of morale

booster. Now, they were in the highest of their spirits.

At this time there were Sikhs who were Sahjdharis and Kesadharis both. The fundamental principles for the both to follow were same. Both were armed and provided with an opportunity to show their skill and bravery in the battle-field. Both were given the same place, respect and patronage by the Guru.

In this way, militarization took place at the time of Guru Hargobind.

Kesadharis were there since the days of Guru Nanak. Comb was necessary to clean the Kes (hair). Kacchera is a kind of underwear which is to keep on reminding a Sikh about his commitment to moral discipline and to serve as a war time dress. There is a possibility that this dress of a Sikh may be there at least since the time of Guru Hargobind. But, even if it was not there, my argument sustains. Kes, Comb and sword, possibly Kacchera also, were there before Guru Gobind Singh. At the time of baptising the Khalsa with his *Amrit*, he added *Kara* and possibly *Kacchera* if it was not there earlier. Therefore, if it comes to counting the articles of faith, maximum two out of the five were added. We can say that at this time everything was not new. But, if we look at the composition, the spirit and the historical significance of this event, it was a revolutionary, a unique step and it had ramifications to which the course of the events of post 1699 A.D. history of world community, bears a testimony.

There is no doubt that Guru Gobind Singh made the wearing of 5 K's compulsory for a Sikh, specially for an Amritdhari Sikh. At many a times he has declared that deficiency or negligence in both, internal and external code *i.e.* wearing of 5 K's also is not acceptable to him. Therefore, for a Sikh simultaneous adherence to inner and outer *maryada* (code) is a must.

No doubt, Guru Gobind Singh prepared a group of Amritdharis who were militarized section of Panth Khalsa. This is what I call the regimented group of the Sikhs. The process of arming Khalsa actually was started by Guru Hargobind. Guru Gobind Singh also had to fight, along with his Sikhs, in a battle-field at Bhangani Sahib even before the first baptismal ceremony took place. Therefore, baptism was an initiative to give a formation, a

distinctive character to the army of the Sikhs.

A Sikh who is morally well-equipped but is without five or less kakars, is still in the process of achieving the final goal. He is not a non-Sikh or non-Khalsa. Therefore, no doubt, an ideal Sikh has to be up to the mark in observing the internal and external code at the same time. Both are equally important. Therefore, Acre is no question of preference. But, internal code serves the foundational base. There cannot be beginning without it.

Guru Gobind Singh, in the year 1699, at Anandpur Sahib (Punjab), baptised Sikhs with the Amrit. Amrit is one of the prominent institutions of Sikhism. At the conceptual level, it belongs to human yearning for immortality. This is one desire which disciplines the human behaviour.

Sikh Gurus transformed this concept into an institution. Guru Nanak, in the 38th Pauri of Japuji Sahib, illustrates this aspect of Sikhism through the image of a smithy or a mint. In this smithy or mint the traditional tools are given new meaning and the object to be forged is a new way of life. For this purpose, Guru Sahib says that discipline be the smithy; Amrit be the metal; patience, wisdom knowledge, fear of God, austerity and attachment with God be the tools. Obviously, Amrit is the major contributory in forging such a personality.

This institution was also carried forward by succeeding Gurus.

For example :

Those who are blessed with your name

They are in bliss from within.

Saith Nanak : Amrit is one, there is no second kind of Amrit.

Var Sarang, m.2, p, 1239

Let us live in union with our Guru, drink Amrit. This will relieve us from duality by killing it.

Gauri Purabi Chhant m,3, p.244

Guru Gobind Singh concretised this tradition by preparing Amrit and baptising his Sikhs with it. This metal, given by Guru Nanak, was used to remodel the Sikhs. Guru Nanak changed the inner self of Sikhs and Guru Gobind Singh changed his outer being also. Not only this, the Tenth Guru himself begged for this Amrit from Panj Pyaras. Thus a baptised Sikh symbolised the cultural

Culmination of the nature, the Sikh code of conduct and the truth in practice.

Progression is the law of nature. God has given this law. He also abides in nature. Thus, He submitted himself to the laws given by Himself. He enjoins upon the path of progression, within the parameters of this principle of self-given and self-abiding single Reality. Guru sits on the giving and receiving ends as a Guru (giver of Amrit) and as a Sikh (receiver of Amrit). This is a highest stage of humanly possible perfection and an Amritdhari Sikh is graced with it. Sikhism has helped a human being to achieve spiritually and physically unified stage where a Sikh and a Guru are mutually identifiable. It is in this context, Bhai Nand Lal through Guru Gobind Singh says :

- Khalsa is my only form, I abide in Khalsa.
Khalsa is my reputation, character.
- Khalsa is my relation, my friend, my manifestation,
- Khalsa is my body and breath.
- Khalsa is the life of my life.
- I am of the Khalsa and Khalsa is mine.

We have inter-mixed like a drop in ocean.

This stage of being is signified by an Amritdhari Sikh.

By introducing institution of Panj Pyaras (five beloved ones) Guru Gobind Singh attempted at building multi-dimensional personality of a Sikh. A baptised Sikh was bound to pronounce that his attitude in future would be purely pro-human. Caste, colour, racial considerations are immaterial for him. Even his earlier family links were renounced. He symbolised the awakening of a new spirit of mutual understanding and acceptance. At the same time, Guru delegated his authority to the Five. Thus, a Guru became a Sikh, a teacher became a taught. Guru Gobind Singh, through this action proved three points. One that authority is not the exclusive prerogative of an individual, howsoever high he may be. Second, that authority is independent of a person. It continues to move on with its own force. Third, authority emanates from People, Sangat and an individual has a right to exercise only till he merits it. Guru Gobind Singh, through, these principles, strengthened the democratic principles. Panj Pyaras in the process

of history played a very important role in the formation of Sikh history. Later on the place of Guru was taken over by the collective Panth Khalsa. Now Panth Khalsa would give Five Pyaras, an executive body, to itself. Once the five are there, they become supreme authority even to Panth Khalsa. They are delegated with an authority to supervise an individual, a group or an institution of the Panth. Exactly, in the sense that the place of Guru and his Sikh (student) is interchangeable, the place of Panth Khalsa and Panj Pyaras is also changeable. In fact, this was an attempt in those days to pass on the authority from an individual to the collective panth/people. An individual is likely to commit folly ignorance or dishonesty. Therefore, the democratic process of the Khalsa Panth which was started by Guru Nanak through conceiving the *Panch Pradhan* and organizing Sangats (congregations) was given a final shape by Guru Gobind Singh.

From among the congregation of about 80 thousand, about 20 thousand persons were baptised. The five took initiative and offered their heads on demand by the Guru. These five became the first Amritdhari and hence *Panj Piaras* (Five beloved ones). This is an institution in itself which played an important role in the formation of Sikh history.

Guru Gobind Singh in response to the given reality, and through this event, took several steps to finalise the ideological body of the Sikhs. He actually completed the movement started by Guru Nanak.

Mr. Mcleod throughout his book divides the Sikhs into two identities that is Khalsa and non-Khalsa. For him Amritdhari is Khalsa and rest is non-Khalsa. This does not make any sense. The Sikh Panth, as a whole, is referred as *Nayara Panth* (distinctive Panth). This means a Khalsa (a Sikh) and his faith are different and distinctive from other faiths since the days of Guru Nanak. This fact is also supported by the diary of emperor Jahangir where he says that Guru is exploiting both Hindus and Muslims by drawing them to his fold. Therefore, this formulation of Mcleod about Khalsa and non-Khalsa identity is incorrect, in the sense that Sikh is distinct since the day of its inception. With baptism, this distinction is consolidated and further confirmed. A spring-board

from within the Panth was created to face the invasion of the tyrants.

Second, Mcleod and Dr. J.S. Grewal have made out a similarity between the meaning of Khalsa in Mughal administration and in Sikhism. According to them, there was a concept of 'Khalsa Land' which meant a land under the direct control of King. They meant when Guru Gobind Singh baptised the Sikh, he transformed them into Khalsa and thus brought them under his direct control. This formulation is the product of a very poor understanding of the subject. Does it mean that Sikhs (Khalsa) earlier were under someone else's control ? Does it mean that those who were not baptised were not under the direct control of Guru ? Were they under the control of someone else ? In fact, the whole of the nation was under the direct control of Guru. It should not be divided into separate sections.

Actually this explains the whole riddle of his concept of Khalsa and non-Khalsa identity. This according to him clearly means and is correct also that Sikhs were regimented into two units. One of them was placed under the direct control of Guru. This part of the statement is incorrect. There were two segments of the same Sikhs : Amrithdhari and non-Amrithdhari. The Unit of Amrithdhari was made to be ever prepared for fighting the oppressive forces in the battle-field. The non-Amrithdhari segment, Sahjdhari and Kesadhari was a reserve for supporting the fighting forces with men and material. Both the segments were complimentary to each other and were always kept in preparedness. This was a step in the formation of the military. Therefore, this thesis about Khalsa and non-Khalsa entity is basically wrong. In fact all Sikhs are a Khalsa. This word is used in Guru Granth Sahib²⁴ and also in Hukam Namas (Royal epistles) of Guru Hargobind, Guru Teg Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh for a non-Amrithdhari Sikh.²⁵

Similar mistakes have been committed by Mr. Mcleod in his assessment about the earlier period also. He says, at p. 25 "The sixth Guru's witnessing the increasing tyranny of Mughal rulers, assumed an enlarged authority and armed his followers in order¹⁰ resist their evil deeds". The concept of enlarged authority is Dually misleading. By this, he is suggesting that peeri (spiritual)

was already the domain of Sikh Gurus and the *meeri* (temporal) was added or included by Guru Hargobind. This is factually wrong and, therefore, untenable by any stretch of imagination. Guru Nanak, as stated above, presented a model of integrated and harmonised life of a Sikh, a total and wholesome being. The relationship between the Guru and his Sikh (student) is linked through the principle of total surrender and total acceptance. When life, a wholesome being, is naturally one and indivisible in spirit and body both, how the question of enlarged authority can take place ? From Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, the same and total authority of *meeri* and *peeri* was within the jurisdiction of every Guru. The authority of any Guru was neither limited nor enlarged.

Guru Gobind Singh also gave a Rabat Maryada (code of living) to an Amritdhari Sikh. As it has been stated above that Kes (hair) comb, sword and possibly Kacchera also, were, even earlier, part of the Sikh character. Therefore, it is not that Guru Gobind Singh was the first to introduce Five K's. Actually, what Guru Gobind did, as in other cases also, he codified and perfected the Rehni (living) of a Sikh. He codified the external aspect of a Sikh's life and combined with it the moral strength given by Guru Nanak. Thus he brought out a completely harmonised and integrated new person, named a Sikh or a Khalsa. Thus, a process of the character building which was started by Guru Nanak was perfected by Guru Gobind Singh. Therefore, in the attempt of giving a Rehni, Guru Gobind Singh is finalising this code of living of a Sikh.

In this connection, three points have to be kept in mind. One, the same spirit that is Guru Nanak was operating and manifesting through his nine succeeding forms. Therefore, none of the ten Gurus was in any way different from the other. Second, the founding principles of each step, in the growth of a Sikh institution and tenets were laid down by Guru Nanak himself, in his *bani*. Therefore, no scope was left for transgressing any of the principles by any of the nine successors. Third, it was because of the given unity in spirit, in all principles and the desired unity in the steps to be taken for implementing them that Guru Nanak provides nine more Nanaks. The initiative which Guru Nanak took had to be

completed successfully, hence the birth of nine more Nanaks.

The image of a Sikh (Khalsa) is projected as :

- Khalsa is one who abandons slandering (others).
- Khalsa is one who fights on the front line in the battlefield.
- Khalsa is one who abandons greed for other's possession (women, property etc.)
- Khalsa is one who absorbs in the divine Name,
- Khalsa is one who has an attachment with Guru
- Khalsa is one who bears the attack (in the battle-field) on his face, Khalsa is one who feeds the poor,
- Khalsa is one who destroys the wicked,
- Khalsa is one who rides the horse,
- Khalsa is one who struggles uninterruptedly.

Tankhah Nama

- Khalsa is one who submits his mind, money and body to Guru

Rahat Nama Bhai Daya Singh

- Similarly, Bhai Nand Lal in Tankhah Nama, Bhai Desa Singh in Rahat Nama and a number of other scholars of this period have detailed description of the attributes of a Sikh and Sikh code of living.

Therefore, this point has to be elaborated here like this. Sikhi (Sikhism) is a faith or religion. Sikh is the follower of Sikhism and Khalsa is an attribute of a Sikh. This perception of Khalsa had also unfolded itself in Sikh history. For example, the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh or of Lahore Darbar was known as the Khalsa Fouj (army) which included generals and sepoys from Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Sikh faith. He, thus, means Khalsa is an attribute of a Sikh which flowered itself into a culture known as Punjabi culture.

The problem of Sikh identity about which Mr. Mcleod is perplexed is very clear, rather it is clearer than the identity of any other person of any other faith. A Sikh is a person with a specific internal and external code of living. When this discipline or code

was given to him, he was called upon by Guru Nanak to live exactly in accordance with it. In this context, when a person was transformed into a Sikh, he started living in the form which was given by God/nature to him. This was, in fact, a stepping stone for entering into a particular type of cultural pattern. Guru Nanak started giving a culture to society according to his own principles of life. These principles were based upon the natural principles given by God. Thus Sikhs started keeping their hair uncut. This is the first and last identity of a Sikh. A Sahjdhari Sikh is still in the process for achieving a cultural base for his prospective growth. Guru Gobind Singh introduced the baptism with Amrit and formulated a code for Amritdhari Sikhs. As stated above the process of stepping into an external code was also initiated by Guru Nanak. Therefore, the code given by Guru Gobind Singh, was actually an endeavour to complete the ideology and a person of Khalsa. This absolutely does not mean that a Kesadhari is prohibited from following this external code. He can, and normally he does follow, except for wearing a *Kirpan*. Thus the internal code given by Guru Nanak, continued throughout and certain items of external code were added from time to time. Guru Gobind Singh combined the internal and external code, the form and spirit and formulated it into a discipline and gave it to an Amritdhari Sikh, presenting him as a complete and perfect model of human being, in terms of his morality and behaviour. He in fact conceived a group of Sikhs who were graced with Amrit, a complete code and were regimented for a particular purpose. The purpose was to continue the struggle against evil through attempting at internal purgation and removal of the external tyrannical order. The founding principle was that an honourable life is to be secured through continuing struggle. This struggle is the meaning of life and a Sikh, particularly, an Amritdhari Sikh is only meant for achieving this.

Therefore, the evolved paradigm is that a Sikh is a Kesadhari Sikh. A Sahjdhari Sikh is still in the process to acquire this identity. An Amritdhari Sikh is a regimented Sikh, who belongs to a regiment of the humanly possible perfect persons created out of the Kesadhari Sikhs, in this way, Sahjdhari is a step behind and

Amritdhari is a step ahead. The basic identity of a Sikh is that of a Kesadhari Sikh.

Caste and Sikhism

In the search for Sikh identity, Mr. Mcleod has also dealt with a few peripheral issues. His approach to such issues is, of course, not positive, which means he either has not verified the actual position, or he could not understand it. For example, he takes up the issue of casteism in Sikhism. Like a number of western and also Indian scholars he is of the opinion that a position about casteism in Sikhism is neither apparent nor fully applied. Thus they conclude that Sikh's emphasis upon eliminating casteism has not fully been implemented.

Sikhism fundamentally stands for one father (God) and everyone else as His child.²⁶ The same blood flows within the body of every human-being. Therefore, Sikhism is strictly pro-human, discarding all barriers within the humanity on the grounds of colour, caste, sex or territory. In order to implement this fundamental tenet of Sikhism, Sikh Gurus took several steps. For example, they wrote inexhaustively on the meaninglessness of caste consideration.²⁷ Second, Guru Nanak, in most unambiguous terms, declares that he is with the lowest of the lowly and he has nothing to do with the people of so called higher castes. He, through his *bani*, expressively communicated that he wanted to see people from all four castes and a number sub-castes to come on the same platform and by mixing with each other should work together in the same sense of involvement and pride. Thus Gurus created a structure for a number of institutions of Sikhism in which these fundamental tenets, presented in *Gurbani*, found historical manifestation. This they did, in order to prove that their's was not an ideology only in words but it was in deeds also.

In order to implement this commitment, Guru Nanak started a common and free kitchen (Langar), practice of seating all in the same row (Pangat) and Congregation (Sangat) where everyone could participate freely. In this kitchen every Sikh, from any caste background, could cook, eat, contribute and distribute on equal basis. Eating together from the same source and in the same

manner while sitting in the same row was really the greatest of the achievements which an Indian could imagine about five hundred years back.

When Guru Ram Das decided to found the city of Amritsar, he planned it in such a manner that about 52 tribes of artisans could settle in it.

When Guru Granth Sahib was compiled, Guru Arjun Dev included in it the *bani* of those who were from the so-called low castes, in the process of history this Granth came to occupy the highest position *i.e.* of Guru in Sikhism and every Sikh, even now, is expected to bow before it. Thus, even those, whose shadow was considered impure were raised to such an exalted status that Sikhs take pride in bowing before them.

In Sikhism, there is no priestly class. Any Sikh from the congregation, competent to act, can act as Granthi (Priest). Thus a number of Granthis (priests) were from the so-called low castes. They used to explain the meaning of *bani* and Sikh traditions to the interested. Actually, in practice, their status was raised above the person of a so-called high caste also. Thus the vanity of caste was broken in such a way that a truly pro-human attitude could be developed in all the members of the Sikh society.

Throughout the growing history of Sikhism the people of so-called low caste contributed in a very significant manner in its development. It was because Gurus tried their utmost to provide them an honourable place in the congregation. As a result of this the history of Sikhism stands witness to the fact that participation of the so-called low caste people was not only welcomed but on many occasions it was praised by Gurus themselves.

The main issue, made out by Mr. Mcleod and many other critics, is-that there was no inter-caste marriage during the time of Sikh Gurus. Even now, caste-considerations prevail upon the choice for partner (pp-108-109). Marriage, as we know, is purely personal affair and a personal contract. There are different methods, ceremonies, and considerations in different societies while choosing a life-partner. The main consideration is normally given to the personal merit of the person concerned and his or her economic and cultural background.

Even now-a-days and people from all societies, choose their spouse while keeping in view the above said factors. Such a purely personal issue cannot be used for criticism and made a basis for determining the significance of a fundamental issue. The main point is that on principle Sikhism does not prohibit an inter-caste marriage. If, after keeping other considerations in view, such a choice is made by a Sikh, the religion does not stand in the way. A number of such marriages, though unrecorded have taken place in history. But, let us suppose, for the argument sake, that even if there is no such example, does it really diminish the importance of other above said steps ? Does it really make the attempt for change insignificant ?

At the same time, undoubtedly there are a number of Sikhs, quite well, who still are not fully free from this evil. Some of them add caste as their surname to their proper name. This has become a fashionable trend in the second half of the 20th century. Even if we accept it as an attempt to identify with casteism it must be treated as an aberration, a deviation from the main tenet of Sikhism. It cannot be taken as fundamental principle. Aberration, particularly, when it is not sanctioned by the scripture, becomes meaningless in a community. Therefore, in Sikh society, this emerging trend has no firm grounding and if in one or another form it comes in, it should be treated only as a step gone astray. This deviation is understandable because of the ignorance of the people concerned or because of the influence of the cultural *milieu* in which one is living.

Status of Women

Mr. Mcleod has discussed the position of women in the Sikh society also. His conclusion (page - 108) is that a Hindu and a Sikh women are not distinguishable particularly in rural background. This is -a very strange proposition. A person cannot be distinguished from the body, particularly, when one wears similar dress. In the given situation, can we distinguish a Christian woman from the Jew woman, or a Hindu woman or a Muslim woman, in many parts of the world. Does it mean that they don't belong to

different religions. It is not and it should not be the dress which distinguishes. It is the psychological make-up of a person which distinguishes one from another. Thus a woman is to be distinguished from her unbarbered hair, her reaction to different situations which means her commitment to the founding principles.

We know that in Guru Nanak's contemporary Indian society a woman was treated as a piece of property, a slave, who had no right to own anything. Guru Nanak in his *bani* and particularly in *Asa Di Var* ²⁸ strongly objects to this attitude towards women. He said that a woman is not inferior to man in any way. She is the central point in every cultural *milieu*. ²⁹ She provides the cultural base to a society, she provides a leadership to the society, she has the capacity to foresee the future and determine her action. Above all the same blood runs through her veins and she is also the child of the same father. There is absolutely no reason to treat her as inferior.

Woman in Sikh society can act as priest. She can participate in all activities of the society as an equal member of congregation, having equal rights to participate and lead.

It is in this ideological frame-work that woman in Sikh society participated in her fullness, in its onward movement, even in battles. Her role in many given situations of history is more distinguished in comparison to men.

Mr. Mcleod is still to grasp and appreciate this fact.

Conversion By Force

On page 58, Mr. Mcleod, while quoting a few scholars, writes, "Although the Sikhs admitted converts from all castes, most were Jats and very few came from Muslim origins (unless converted by force)".

A neutral observer can easily understand the factually wrong import of this observation. He has brought in two points, including one in brackets. We have already discussed the status of Jats in Panth.

A large number of Muslims joined Panth right from the days of Guru Nanak willingly. There was never an occasion for forced

conversion. A person with little knowledge about Sikhism knows that there is no theory of conversion in Sikhism. During the time of Guru Nanak, a number of Hindus, Muslims and Dalits joined the fold of Guru Nanak. They were not converted to Sikhism, they became Sikhs. Therefore, it is not a matter of conversion but a matter of being.

History of the Sikhs also stands a testimony to it. Even during the rule of such a powerful ruler, like Maharaja Ranjit Singh, there was not a single case of conversion by force, recorded by even the enemies of the Sikhs. In this connection, Mr. Mcleod has given another twist also. He says, at p-63, "Individual Muslims were employed as state servants (some of them with considerable authority) but the eighteenth century hostility towards Muslims had not been wholly exorcised from all areas of government nor from Sikh society in general." This observation makes a non-sense of everything. Sikhs, in history, were never hostile to anyone including Muslims. They were hostile to the oppressive and aggressive designs of the State. Probably Mr. Mcleod is unable to differentiate between state and Muslims. As a matter of fact, as stated above, a good number of Muslims were fighting against the State's oppressive machinery alongwith Sikhs, right from the time of the Sikh Gurus. We have such examples from throughout the history.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's **Rule**

Dr. Mcleod says, at page - 63, "This did not mean, however, that all Sikhs were satisfied with the attitudes and behaviour generated by military success or political patronage. From the period of Ranjit Singh to date two reform movements still command significant followings today. These are the original Nirankaris and the group variously known as Namdharis or as Kukas. Both are strictly sects, emerging within the larger Panth during the same period and in the same part of the Maharaja's domains."

This observation is not correct. Nirankari Movement was a purely spiritual movement and such movements do come up even during the most successful and loved rulers. Such movements

come up to fill up some sort of vacuum in the spiritual life of the time. Therefore, if there was some dissatisfaction in the spiritual domain, Ranjit Singh alone could not be held responsible for it. Namdhari movement originated more than a decade after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh worked very hard to promote Punjabi identity, grounding it in the Sikh culture. For this he took a number of steps, hitherto unknown in the political history of the world. In order to prove my point let me get help from this contemporary Muslim poet.

Shah Mohammad, a Punjabi poet, had an immeasurable amount of praise for Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He describes him, "The most powerful Ranjit Singh was born to rule the state and to restructure the (map of) the country. He conquered a number of provinces like Multan, Kashmir, Peshwar, Chamba, Jammu, Kangra and Ladhak, right up to China".³⁰ The whole of it formed the kingdom of Lahore Ranjit Singh united them and many other principalities under one kingdom. Earlier throughout the history of Punjab, it was either ruled by Delhi or by Kabul or partly by both through a number of small principalities. For the first time in the history of Punjab, the kingdom of Punjab with Maharaja Ranjit Singh as an independent and sovereign identity came into being on the map of India. According to Shah Mohammad this was the Kingdom of Punjab, government by Punjabis, conquered and sustained by their love and labour. This was an experiment which had several lessons for the world community to learn. Unfortunately, in the interest of the world community, history could not repeat itself.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh took several steps to strengthen the Punjabi identity. He clearly demonstrated through his policies and actions that kingdom of Punjab belongs to all Punjabis and neither to himself nor to the people of his religion only. To make this perception workable he re-modelled the very psyche of the people of Punjab. For example :

1. He belonged to a community which was severely persecuted by the earlier rulers of Punjab. His forefathers were subjected to a number of indignities. According to the

established legacy of the world history, when a persecuted people capture power from the persecutor, there is a tendency to take revenge from the earlier persecutors. This vicious circle is a permanent part of the order of the world. Sometimes the persecution becomes exemplary. But, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, instead of persecuting the earlier persecutors, shared power with them. Thus, Muslims and their allies that is Hindus were made partners in the destiny of the kingdom of Punjab.

2. Contrary to the given legacy, the religious prejudices were unknown in the kingdom of Punjab. Punjabi language, which was also the religious language of the Sikhs, (because their religious text is written in it), was not made official language. No doubt, the Punjabi was cultural language of all Punjabis, it belonged to land and hence to every inhabitant of Punjab, yet to avoid any mis-understanding on this ground, he allowed Persian language to continue as official language. It was, among other reasons, to avoid any controversy regarding his preferential consideration for any religious group.
3. It is a recorded fact of history that charity was equally distributed to the religious institutions of all the religious groups.
4. Maharaja Ranjit Singh used to run the Government in the name of Khalsa/Guru/God, proving that kingdom did not belong to him but to Guru/God. Because Guru/God were same for all, therefore, Lahore Darbar was also same for all. It was everyone's ownership because everyone represented Guru/God. It is in this context that Ranjit Singh used not to wear a crown, did not sit on throne, and did not issue any coin or stamp in his name. The difference between the ruler and the ruled thus stood eliminated. He would love himself to be called only Sarkar (ruler), Sevadar (Servant) or Singh Sahib and not the owner of the kingdom.

This restructuralisation of the power frame and refashioning of the human psyche helped Maharaja Ranjit Singh to build a vast,

strong and viable Punjabi kingdom with new perception and renewed strength. This experiment proved to be a miracle. Earlier Punjab was being invaded, captured, truncated and ruthlessly ruled by a number of nations, throughout its living memory. It is only at this point of history that Punjab got sovereignty. It was now being ruled by Punjabis, its own people. This realisation of the self-identity harmonised its inner and outer strength which not only kept itself intact in the face of furious attacks but began to teach a lesson to the earlier invaders in their own land. This miracle was the product of the formation and realisation of Sikh identity, which brought forth the Punjabi identity.

This endeavour of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, signifies the grandeur and uniqueness of Sikh political model, a singular achievement of the mankind.

Word as Guru

The decision of Guru Gobind Singh, to declare 'Word' as Guru, was in fact a decision which was taken by Guru Nanak himself. This decision was accepted and practised by succeeding Gurus also. For example :

In the true mint, Word is forged.

S.G.G.S.m.I, p-8

Word is deep and serious Gur and Pir (Muslim preacher) The world is bewildered without this.

S.G.G.S., m.I (Ashtapadi) p. 635

Word is Guru, disciple's attachment with Guru is its sound.

S.G.G.S.m.I. p. 943

How an atheist can have an attachment with Word. Without this attachment with Word, he has to take birth and die.

S.G.G.S.m.I.1, p. 1042

Bani (Word) is Guru, Guru is Word. Word is full of all nectars. If word says and disciple believes Guru will emancipate invariably.

S.G.G.S.m.4, p. 988

In *Gurbani*, God, Guru, Word are synonymous. Guru Nanak

repeatedly tells in his *bani* that his Guru is God, his Guru is Word. Therefore, in the declaration of Guru Gobind Singh that Guru Granth Sahib is the future Guru of Khalsa, in fact, Guru Nanak's concept of a Guru is transforming itself into an institution. When Guru Arjun Dev Ji compiled the body of Guru Granth Sahib he clearly anticipated its future position and started treating it as Guru *i.e.* Guru of the Khalsa during his life time. He himself used to sit in its presence after placing it on a higher platform. Thus, Guru Granth Sahib or the 'Word' contained in it, is the Guru of the Khalsa since the day of its birth *i.e.* since the days of Guru Nanak. In fact, this is the basis of the belief of the Sikhs, as enshrined in Sikh scriptures that all the ten Gurus were one in spirit and one in deed. Only Guru Nanak operated through the succeeding nine forms. The declaration of the Tenth Guru was only an event in this historical sequence.

Guru Granth to Guru Panth

Mr. Mcleod is confused to understand the relationship between Granth and Panth. At many places, in his book, particularly on page - 56, he finds a dichotomy between the two. So much so, he makes out that in a particular given situation one dominated the other. This approach is not correct. Granth and Panth are not two different identities. They are inter-related and one is transferring itself into another.

Granth is the Guru of the Sikhs. Granth contains the word, which means the word is the Guru of the Sikhs. It can guide, and it definitely guides the historical process of the Sikh society. But at times there has to be a physical existence of an institution to participate in or to guide a particular movement. Keeping in view this requirement and also to keep Khalsa away from the concept of a Guru in a person, the 10th Guru declared Panth as a visible Guru of the Khalsa. It is a case of invisible becoming visible. The Granth is transforming itself into a Panth. Panth as such represents the spirit from the body of the Granth. Therefore, Panth is given the authority of a Guru. It is from this point of view that the

principle of Gurmata emerged and played its role in the post-Guru Gobind Singh period of Sikh history. Thus, Granth or Panth are not two different identities and there is no reason for one to supersede another. In both the cases whether Granth is acting as Guru or Panth is acting as Guru, it absolutely means the same.

Gurmata

McLeod when refers to the fact that during the period of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Guru Panth and resultantly Gurmata (resolution in the name of Guru) got into the background. It was gone through only once during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule. This is wrong presumption. Gurmata is something to be used sparingly. There has to be a situation, a need, an urgency when whole of the Panth should be involved to adopt a Gurmata. Mostly it is in a trying situation. Once Gurmata is passed, a Sikh is required to work in its direction till another situation arises and requires another Gurmata. McLeod's observation, on page - 63, "but assemblies of the Sarbat Khalsa were no longer held and the institution of the Gurmata was effectively suppressed", indicates the lack of understanding of spirit of Sikh institutions. In fact, after passing Gurmata once, the historical situation did not call for a second attempt at it, during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's period. Therefore, attaching of motives is unjustified.

Sahjdhari

On page-112, of his book, Dr. McLeod has deliberately created a confusion regarding the concept of Sahjdhari and Amritdhari Sikh.

Guru Nanak transformed the existing human material into a Sikh by bringing in an inner change. The docile, morbid and at the same time ego-centrics both were given a new mental make up developing into a new personality. Guru Nanak used many devices to bring about this change. He travelled far and wide, composed *bani*, sang, preached and many a time, in order to make his point of view communicable, struck at the roots of people's mental sickness. Thus the process of building the transformed one into

a new person was started by Guru Nanak, nourished by his eight successors and perfected by Guru Gobind Singh. However, this does not mean that Sahjdhari or Kesadhari Sikhs ceased to exist. The process of completion, that is growing from a Sahjdhari to an Amritdhari Sikh also continued throughout the history even after Guru Gobind Singh.

In this way, Guru Gobind Singh revived the commitment of Guru Nanak, prepared a Sikh to face the hurdles which were likely to come on the way of its fulfilment. At the same time by baptising Sikhs, he regimented them and dedicated them to the higher values of life. Thus, a person becomes a Sahjdhari Sikh, a Sahjdhari becomes a Kesadhari and a Kesadhari becomes an Amritdhari Sikh.

Patit

Mr. Mcleod has raised the question of a *Patit* Sikh also. He is at a loss to understand where to place him. *Patit* means a declined Sikh. He has turned away from the challenges posed by Sikh way of life. In this connection Mr. Mcleod observes, "One other uncertainty indicated by the diagram concerns the *Patit* Sikh. We have already noted that the *Patit* Sikh is one who has violated the Khalsa vow and that strictly speaking the term can only be applied to lapsed Amrit-dharis". (page-114). This observation is wrong. *Patit* is not only from the Amritdhari group. It is a violation of the founding principle. Whosoever has committed it, is *Patit*. In this way a *Patit* can be from all the three groups i.e. Sahjdhari, Kesadhari and Amritdhari.

But, this does not mean that *Patit* is thrown out of Sikhism. He has been put aside as one who has committed an unexpected and unprincipled act. It also does not mean that his option to become a fully bloomed Sikh is closed. Sikhism takes a human view of the sin. It is not the sin part of God which is pressed. ", But, it is the forgiving nature of God which is brought forth. Therefore, to err is human, equally true is to forgive. Guru/God "not only forgives, but it is in his nature also to show the right path"¹¹¹ future.³¹ This relationship between God/Panth and a Sikh is the

sustaining reality. A Sikh must move in society with this confidence. Thus a *Patit* is not forsaken but kept in wait till he realises his mistake, begs for the forgiveness of God/Panth and rejoins the main stream in all humbleness. Similarly, those Sikhs who have crossed over to different sects, follow a Guru other than Sri Guru Granth Sahib, are *Patit* and are still in the process of rejoining the main stream. They may be better than or ahead of many of those who claim to be Sikhs but they too have not fully appropriated the definition of a Sikh.

Religion is the saviour of the poor. Largely, the poor and uneducated seek its protection. The rich, equipped with modern education, normally take little interest in religion. To some extent, they are ego-centrics also. They have the arrogance of being protected by their economic or educational status. Second, almost every religion, except Sikhism, is myth-oriented. Therefore, their capacity to satisfy such people is limited. Ego combined with Obsession to irrational attitude of such religions promote a kind of aversion-to religion in their mind. As a result of it they start distancing themselves and, many a times, criticising religion itself. This happens in the realm of traditional religions and of politics. In Sikhism also there are so many people, alongwith communists, who tend to demonstrate such tendencies. But the number of such people in Sikhism, as compared to other religions, is marginal. It is primarily because Sikhism continues to hammer in the values of sweetness, mutual respect, humility and the doctrinal base provided to the human values and actions. The role of reason and logic, in Sikhism has replaced the role of myth in religion. Sikhism is fairly convinced that moral richness is more effective and lasting than material richness.³² Hence the former is preferable to the latter. Therefore, the human action must be given a proper perspective.

Thus, fall from the Sikh code of living is because of two reasons. In poor, it is because of ignorance and in rich it is because of their arrogance, in the name of convenience. Such Sikhs are *Patit*. But, it is an exception. Problem with Mr. Mcleod is that he tries to read rule into an exception.

Those who plead for nationhood for Sikhs, are not without a logic. Sikhs had emerged as nation during the 18th and 19th century. They had achieved the identity of a sovereign nation. The British Government when annexed the Khalsa Raj from Maharaja Dalip Singh it entered into an agreement to return it when Maharaja attained adulthood. The British Government, later on, backed out. When communal award was announced and Muslim League and Congress accepted it, this award accepted Sikhs as third party or third nation. Even Congress accepted and fought elections through this instrument. Later on Congress also backed out.

To me it appears that *Quam* has larger context than a nation. Nation identifies itself with land and a political group. Whereas *Quam* includes in itself the religion, the culture, the civilization, the life-style, the language of the people. In a nation, in the political idiom, people with varying such characteristics club themselves into a nation. But, this will be a clubbing together of multi-identities. Second, is it fair to club together by force and then ask for creative results. Whereas a nation, in the political parlance, finally binds itself to certain identifiable geographical boundaries, the *Quam* while maintaining distinct identity, extends beyond the narrow national limits.

Mr. Mcleod says, at page-12, "It was probably Guru Amar Das who borrowed from the Sufis the practice of compulsory commensality, thereby giving practical expression to the first ideal. In the Sikh tradition this inter-dining convention as the Langar".

The practice of Langar was started by Guru Nanak at

Kartarpur, Guru Amar Das only institutionalised it. Second, it is not compulsory commensality but it is desirable commensality. It is another thing that Sikhs responded to the desire of Guru wholeheartedly and thus raised the importance of this institution. I think Mr. Mcleod is wrong in observing that this institution was borrowed from Sufis. The Langar is not only confined to dining, it has a doctrinal value like that of social interaction, social participation, social responsibility to feed hungry, share with the needy, and to promote social service without selfishness. These values were unknown to Sufis.

Mr. Mcleod is just unable to go into the doctrinal value of an institution. Guru Nanak sought to change the psychological makeup of an individual. For this he did not destroy the given body of a human-being. Similarly, he changed the meaning of the words, which he drew from different available sources. He gave a doctrinal base to the historical life of a man. He himself founded Kartarpur, and the institution of Dharmsal and Langar etc. The succeeding Gurus organized certain institutions on the basis of doctrinal teachings of Guru Nanak. If Guru Amar Das provided the sacred well for the pilgrimage of the Sikhs or fixed some days as festivals or the decision to found Amritsar a central place for Sikhism, he does not, in any way, contradicted the doctrinal issues raised by Guru Nanak. As in the case of institution of Langar, the meaning, the practice and the value of these institutions are drastically different from those of such institutions in other faiths. No ritual is attached to any institution. In fact, Guru Amar Das simplified the life and shaped the human psyche in accordance with principles given by Guru Nanak.

Rejection of Pahul

Dr. Mcleod quotes Dr. J.S. Grewal, on page 44, "a considerable number of people — the Brahmins and Khatri in particular — rejected the pahul". This is a mischievous observation. It is true that a large number of them did not join the new regimented unit of Khalsa. Not joining and rejection are altogether different things. Even otherwise this statement is wrong. Continuing on the same

e Mcleod writes, "The fact that a Brahmin and Khatri Sikhs were conspicuous amongst those who declined to accept the new order presumably means that the predominant response came from jats accompanied by smaller numbers from artisan castes." This again is a wrong proposition. The caste background of the five pyaras tells us that one of them was Khatri, one was a Jat. The next three were from artisans castes. Mr. Grewal and Mr. Mcleod, I think know pretty well that number of Jats in the Sikh fold increased during the *misal* period. But, I don't want to stress my claim on this ground. I simply want to emphasise that in Sikhism caste considerations are meaningless and find no sanction whatsoever. It is a clever move on the part of the motivated scholars to divide the Sikhs on caste grounds.

Opposition to 5 K's

Mr. Mcleod is again notable, where he says, on page 45, "Those who emphasized Guru Nanak's interior practice of *Nam Simran* as opposed to the outward symbols of the new Khalsa identity would thus come to be known as those who affirm Sahj or Sahjdhari Sikhs." A close examination of the above statement would reveal the inner core of the thinking of Mr. Mcleod. The fact of the matter is that Sahjdharis were fresh entrants in Sikhism. They were actually in the preparatory period and were likely to reach the stage of humanly possible perfection that is of a Amritdhari Sikh. They were never opposed to outward symbols of the new Khalsa order. But, Mr. Mcleod presumes mutual opposition, contradiction or unacceptance. This, absolutely, is not the case. *Nam Simran* is fundamental principle, a linking force, for a Sikh at all the three stages.

Singh Sabha Movement

On page 109, Mr. Mcleod has tried to make out that the present consolidated identity of the Sikhs is the contribution of Singh Sabha Movement. This he has stated at a number of places in his other works also. But on page 86, he says, "In the preliminary Punjab

census Sikhs were included as Hindus, but from 1868 onwards they were listed separately". If it was 1868, then it was before the advent of Singh Sabha Movement. This movement came into being in 1873 A.D.

It was more during Anglo-Sikh wars and the role of Sikh army in suppressing the 1857 mutiny ³³ that the distinctness of Sikh soldier as the torch bearer of Sikh Nation was acknowledged in contrast to the necessary Poorbia (North Indian) soldiers employed by the British. The subsequent census report merely recognises this fact of history. Shah Mohammad, in his own way, endorses this view point.

Masand into Khalsa

Mr. Mcleod on page 28 discusses the replacement of Masands by the Khalsa order., In order to strengthen this argument, he quotes Dr. J.S. Grewal as well. He says, "This concerns the role of Masands as a possible reason for founding the Khalsa as a formal order". This means both of them form this opinion about founding of the Khalsa. It is amusing to believe that the need to eliminate Masands became the need to found Khalsa. Do they mean that Khalsa was brought in to look after the duties which were hitherto being looked after by Masands ? Were Masands fighting in the battle-field ?

Twist in Translation

Mr. Mcleod's habit of twisting the facts has no limits. For example, he translates the couplet, at page 50, "Raj Karega Khalsa".

The Khalsa shall rule, no enemy shall remain. All who endure suffering and privation shall be brought to the safety of the Guru's protection. How funny is this translation ? The actual translation can be: "The Khalsa shall rule, no opposition (hurdle) shall be there. Those who turn their back to Guru, shall be back on the right path to meet Guru and in His protection shall they survive."

Theory of Succession

In a footnote, at page 52, he says, "By the time of Gobind Singh the successor as Guru was always chosen from amongst the male lineage in the Guru's own family, normally the eldest son of the deceased Guru. All four of Guru Gobind Singh's sons had predeceased him". This statement is factually wrong and mischievously brought in. By the time of Guru Gobind Singh, the successor as Guru was not always from amongst the Guru's family. Second, not always the eldest son of the Guru. Third, Guru Gobind Singh did not pass on the Guruship to Guru Granth Sahib, simply because he had no surviving son.

To answer his argument, I wish to remind him that when Guru Gobind Singh selected Panj Pyaras, the highest seat of power in Panth, he did not include any of his sons, who were very much there. Guru Gobind Singh himself has repeatedly said that Khalsa was his son. He himself gave a Guru to Khalsa in Guru Granth and in its manifestation in Khalsa Panth. The concept of *Shabad* as Guru was continuously accepted from Guru Nanak onwards and, therefore, it was in the fitness of things to declare Guru Granth Sahib as Guru. This fact, he has accepted in the last para on page 53 of the same book also. This clearly means he does not mind contradicting himself.

Anecdote

There is another example regarding Mr. Mcleod's art of twisting the facts. On page 45, he says, "In one anecdote an impoverished Sikh cuts and sells his hair in order to purchase food for the Guru." He is trying to make out that if situation demands a Sikh does not mind cutting his hair or Sikhs did not mind if someone would cut their hair. Actually, in this anecdote of questionable authenticity the symbolic emphasis is upon serving the guest. Sikhism believes that if a guest remains unattended in the family of a Sikh, it is the greatest of the sins. Therefore, whatever be the cost, the guest must be served honourably. The kitchen of the Sikhs has to remain open all the 24 hours for a hungry or

guest. This is a fundamental principle of Sikhism. The writer of this anecdote wanted to prove that a Sikh could sacrifice the dearest of his possession and that was his hair in order to serve the guests. Mr. Mcleod is unable to see beyond his own cultural barriers.

Declined Pahul

At another place at page 45, he says, "It is thus evident that those who declined to accept pahul continued to live as Nanakpanthi Sikhs, loyal to their original inheritance". He plays two mischiefs in this sentence. As stated above, it is absolutely not a case of declining. Second, loyal to their original inheritance means those who joined the new fold were not loyal to their new faith. This absurdity is either due to ignorance or some motivation.

Bad Sikh

On page 100, Mr. Mcleod concludes that one who does not reach the ideal state of a Sikh is a 'Bad' Sikh. I think such a Sikh can at the most be termed as one who is on the path to perfection or who is a *Patit*. Calling someone 'Bad' particularly in terms of one's placing in a social group, is not an academic expression.

Epilogue

I want to produce a para from page 56 of the book to prove my thesis that this gentleman is not sure as to what he is saying. Let us examine the para given below :

"Eventually this latter usage was enlarged to include the *dharmasal* and it *seems likely* that it was the doctrine of the eternal Guru which produced the change. It *may* have been because *sangat* which gathered in a *dharmasals* represented the corporate Guru, or it *may* have resulted from the practice of installing copies of the sacred scripture (the Guru Granth) in the room which served as a *dharmasala*. The former is *perhaps the more likely*, for copies of the sacred scripture would have been too expensive for many *sangats* until the printing press eventually made them obtainable.

If "the latter is the dominant reason it *presumably* means that the shift from dharmasals to gurdwara is comparatively recent."

In one para, on almost every issue he writes : it seems, it is likely, it may have been, it may have resulted, presumably, perhaps etc. This clearly speaks of his lack of confidence about the points he is making. I think this is enough to assess the value of his work. Hence we see that the problem with Mr. Mcleod is that he is extremely vague, self-contradictory and fond of twisting the facts. This leads one to believe that he cannot escape the allegation of being a motivated scholar. For example :

- "The dual concept, whatever its actual origin, it is traditionally located in the period and in the intention of Guru Hargobind". (Page 24)

The use of the words whatever and traditionally make the meaning of the sentence vague.

"Guru Amar Das is traditionally credited with having established the *manji* system of supervision" (Page 12).

Again the use of word traditionally creates the vagueness.

"Manji jurisdictions certainly existed at an early stage of the Panth's history, and, although their precise nature is exceedingly vague".(Page 12).

is natural step to take, but not an inevitable one". (Page 11).

A look at the use of the words vague and inevitable reveals the mind of the writer.

"The singing of *Kirtan* in the context of the *satsang* was not a ritual unique to the Nanak Panth" (Page 19).

- "Any man or woman who acknowledged the royalty and joined with others to observe a particular pattern of worship would be plainly identified as a Sikh of Guru Nanak". (Page 19)
- "The nature of the loyalty undergoes a progressive change as the Baba image of Nanak is displaced by the Guru image, and as the Guru status is supplemented by the attributes of royalty. The lineage which commences with the humble Sant ideal is thereby transformed into a succession of 'True Kings' (Sacha Padasah)". (Page 19).

The use of the words 'displaced', 'humble ' begs for attention. This occurs on one page only.

"According to this variant tradition, Guru Gobind Singh had realized that his Sikhs were mere sparrows, weak and timorous creatures who could never be trusted to face armed injustice without taking instant fight." (Page 27).

Let wise-men themselves read and analyse this sentence.

"The rahit-nama must be read as a mid-century interpretation of the Khalsa and its duty, as perceived by a particular family of Chhibhar Brahmans, once influential in the Panth, but not pushed aside by coarsely aggressive successors". (Page 38).

Please attend to the last portion of the sentence. -

"By 1921 the so-called Gurdwara Reform Movement was already under way". (Page 87).

This 'so-called' word is repeated very often in his books. He is very faithful in creating confusion about almost every institution and principle.

"It was an involvement which began in defeat and uncertainty. Guru Gobind Singh himself fought wars which a detached observer would regard as defeats, although we must also need the interpretation which transforms these events by stressing the heroism and inflexible determination of the Guru. Uncertainty followed with Banda Bahadur, leader of the uprising which created a disturbance in the Punjab between 1709". (Page 48)

. Use of the words 'defeat', 'uncertainty', 'uprising', 'disturbance' is worth attention.

Panth's struggle for sovereignty, which went through many ups and downs, is termed as defeat, uprising and disturbance.

These are only few examples which reflect the writer's mind. Otherwise, this type of flirtation with words and ideas is witnessed on every page, Just read page 46 and see for yourself. Explanations and arriving at a conclusive definition of a Sikh is the main theme of this book. But on page 86, he says about it, "The definition of a Sikh, clearer now than it had ever been during the past two centuries, was still open to uncertainty and continuing

debate". And in ending para of the book *i.e.* page 121, he says, "It must surely be obvious that in the framing of this summary definition historical corners have been cut and that the word 'orthodox' has been used to cover what should properly be treated as an assumption rather than a proven fact. The only possible defence is that complex communities can never be summarized in neat, concise, unqualified terms."

This speaks out the worth of Dr. W.H. Mcleod's works on Sikh Studies.

References

1. Greed and sin, both are king and his minister, falsehood has become the seeker. Cupidity is the assistant, who sits on judgement.
S.G.G.S., m.l, p.468
2. The kings have become butchers, the righteousness has flown away.
Thus the kalyug (dark age) has become a dagger. The *Amavas* (the darkest night) is prevailing. The moon of truth is not seen anywhere.
S.G.G.S., m.l, p. 145
3. Self-respect and righteousness both have disappeared, O! Lalo.
Falsehood has gained prominence.
The Kazi and Brahman (Muslim and Hindu Priest) are no more in demand. Now hymns are read by wicked.
S.G.G.S., m.l. p. 722
4. Nanak; what kind of world has become ? There is none left to be guide or friend. The brotherly, friendly relationship (of love) is wanting. They have sacrificed faith for wealth.
S.G.G.S.,m,l, p.1410
5. The falsehood is universal in the world (society). The essence of the word is in merely living
S.G.G.S. p. 232
6. Till we are living in this world, we must say something and listen something.
S.G.G.S., m. 1, p. 661

7. Female is in male and male is in female. Know O! God-knowing person.

S.G.G.S., m.1, p. 879

8. How to become a Sachiar (one who lives a truthful living) ? How to break the wall of falsehood ? By realising the order, By living by the will (of God) Nanak writes alongwith.

Dr. Darshan Singh, Japuji Sahib : Context and Concerns of Guru Nanak (1993), page 47.

9. Night, season, date and day. (it refers to seven planets) Air, water, fire (elements) and nether regions. In the mutual gravitation of these, He has established earth (Dharamsal) as a place for meriting religion. On this earth there is variety of life, colour and kind. Endless is the variety in their names. Everyone is judged by one's actions. He is true and His court is true. In His court, the accepted five sit in their grandeur. They (five) are blessed with His insignia (flag). True and false are judged by them. Saith Nanak : Those who repeat (His name) are discerned.

ibid, Pauri - 34

10. If I weep, the whole world weeps. Even the trees and birds weep.

S.G.G.S., m.1, p. 558

11. O! mind, you are the light of life, Realise your origin. O! mind, God is within you, enjoy, through Guru's grace, The pleasure of union with Him.

S.G.G.S., m. 3, p.441

12. This mind is action, This mind is virtue, This mind is born of five elements.

S.G.G.S., m. 3, p.415

13. Bhai Kahan Singh, in his Mahan Kosh (1960), p. 519, has given nine types of Sikhs. At page - 103, about a Sahjdhari Sikh, he says, "One group of Sikhs, who do not go in for baptism with the Amrit of *Khanda* (double edged sword), do not bear *Kirpan* and wear *Kacchera* and do not repose faith in any religious scriptures but Sri Guru Granth Sahib". Further, while quoting 'Ratan Mal' on the same page, he says, "My Sikhs are of three types : Sahj, Charni and Khand (baptised with the Amrit of *Khanda*), who has accepted the principle of Sikh Gurus."

14. The sense of greed and ego is strictly prohibited in my way of Khanda.
S.G.G.S., m. 5, p. 534
15. S.G.G.S., m. 1, p.465
16. S.G.G.S., m. 1, p.356
17. S.G.G.S., m. 4, p.305
18. S.G.G.S., m. 1, p.360
19. M.A. Macauliffe; The Sikh Religion, Vol. 3 (1985), p. 15, S. Chand & Company, Delhi.
20. There are people who are oppressed. There are people who are still more oppressed. Saith Nanak : I am with those and have no relation with (so-called) big people
S.G.G.S., m. 1, p.15
21. "Let him sit fully armed on his throne and maintain an army to the best of his ability".
History of the Sikhs, Vol. 1, (1989), p. 155, Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, Delhi.
22. If we have to live at the cost of our dignity, everything that we eat becomes ill-gotten (Haram),
S.G.G.S., m. 1, p.142
23. M.A. Macauliffe, The Sikh Religion, Vol. III, (1985), pp. 108 to 118, S. Chand & Company, New Delhi.
24. Saith Kabir : Those who are influenced with love of God, They have become Khalsa.
S.G.G.S., p.655
25. Dr. Ganda Singh, Hukamname (1967), pp. 67, 77.
26. There is one father (God) and we all are His children.
S.G.G.S., p. 611
27. The sense of Jati (caste) is useless, The pride of (big) name is useless, The protector (God) is same for everyone.
28. S.G.G.S. p. 473.
29. In whole of the family she is the most venerable. She guides her younger brothers-in-law and elder brothers-in-law.
S.G.G.S.m.S, p. 371
30. Sita Ram Kohli, Jang Nama Shah Mohammad, (1960) p 141
31. S.G.G.S.m.5, p. 624
32. Those who own wealth, actually they are beggars, Those, in whom you (God) abide, They are the persons virtually rich.
S.G.G.S.m.1, p. 1287
33. For details see Dr. Ganda Singh and R.C. Majumdar.

TWO *

This thesis of **Dr. Pashaura Singh** builds itself entirely upon only one point and that is that Goindwal's pothis and the manuscript No. 1245 lying in Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, presumed to be of Adi Granth, were the manuscripts which were available to Guru Arjan Dev at the time of the compilation of Adi Granth. Therefore, according to Dr. Pashaura Singh, Guru Arjan Dev worked upon these manuscripts and prepared many drafts before the final draft of Adi Granth was prepared in 1604 A.D. If only this were his opinion, though it is unproved and hence-unaccepted, it might have been considered, at least for the sake of argument. But, he does not stop here. He further observes that during the process of compilation of Adi Granth Guru Arjan Dev worked upon the *bani* of preceding Gurus also. He changed the lines, the words, rearranged them for the clarification and strengthening of a particular point of view and made many interpolations and incorporations for the 'refinement' of the words and adjustment of the ideas. This observation in terms of its authenticity is not only untenable but unthinkable. Rather it is criminal and unlike of a research scholar. Further, the whole of this thesis is standing upon the walls of sand, and the moment it confronts the reality, it collapses.

Dr. Pashaura Singh writes on page 9, "Thus there is a question of the authenticity of the Jalandhar pothi and of whether or not it is one of the original volumes prepared under the supervision of the third Guru or just a copy of the original". He himself is not

* A commentary on Or. Pashaura Singh's Ph. D, thesis titled 'The Text and Meaning of Adi Granth.'

The page numbers which I have given throughout, mean numbers of the pages of the manuscript (by Dr. Pashaura Singh), which I have gone through.

sure of the authenticity or the originality of the Pothi. To me it appears from the subsequent treatment of the subject from PP. 9 to 12 by Dr. Pashaura Singh himself that these two pothis, which he has consulted, are the copies of an original pothi prepared by Baba Sahans Ram which was lost like most of the precious Sikh literature, during the turmoil of Sikh history. In the process of copying, scribes either committed mistakes or changed or manipulated to meet their own vested interest. This can be the attempt of Hindalis or Minas. Dr. Singh has extolled them because he has made these pothis the touchstone for examining the manuscript of Adi Granth.

Dr. Pashaura Singh further states, " This theory of the origin of the Banno tradition, therefore, represents the union of Hindali, Udasi and Bhatra interest", (p.74). This exactly is the case about the Goindwal pothis and the manuscript No. 1245 which he consulted. Like other innumerable later recensions of Adi Granth, manuscript No. 1245 is full of variations and deviations. This also is the product of vested interests of the estranged sections of the Sikhs after the execution of Guru Arjan Dev Ji.

All the 8 features of manuscript No. 1245, discussed by Dr. Pashaura Singh, on pages 25 to 27, can easily be reversed for evolving a factually correct perspective and thus it can be concluded that the change in all the eight cases was actually brought in by the later scribes. Thus, one is led to believe, because the whole treatment of this subject by Dr. Pashaura Singh points towards this end, that he has made very funny formulations. For example, he says on page 93 to 97, that Guru Arjan Dev revised the Mul Mantar from the Goindwal's Pothi to manuscript No. 1245, and from manuscript No. 1245 to the present Granth. Does it make any sense ? Particularly, when he himself believes, "The origin of the major components of the earlier form of the Mul Mantar as given in the Goindwal Pothis can be traced directly from the work of Guru Nanak", (p.93).

There are three points which deserve our attention ; First,

Further, it is claimed that the manuscript contains a hymn written in Bhai Budha's hand on the third decorated page", (p.27). Bhai (Baba) Budha was not a writer. Therefore, this conclusion is fake.

Second, in manuscript No. 1245, this hymn, claimed to be written by Baba Budha Ji, is written in the name of Nanak like the succeeding Gurus' way of writing in the name of Nanak. This feet Dr. Pashaura Singh likes to hide. How can a devout Sikh like Baba Budha do this ? Third, Baba Budha was alive even after the execution of Guru Arjan Dev Ji. If, he had written a hymn and it was included in the Adi Granth, it could be done only after the execution of the 5th Guru. It could not be the case that Guru Sahib included his hymn in one manuscript, that is manuscript No. 1245, and dropped the same in the Adi Granth.

"Furthermore folio 1255 of the manuscript contains the death-dates of the first five Gurus only" (p.28). There cannot be a more solid and dependable proof than this one. Second, manuscript No. 1245 extends beyond pp. 1255 up to 1266 i.e. even after giving the death dates of five Gurus. This clearly indicates that this manuscript is not written by one person and also not at one time. This, together with other indications, like unsystematic arrangement of the matter, leaving about 150 pages blank, about 12 pages with only one hymn written on them, missing of the Bhagat *bani*, the inclusion of the *kachi* (not approved by Guru Arjan Dev) and *pakki* (approved by Guru Arjan Dev) *bani* alternatingly, clearly means that writers of this manuscript No. 1245 did this job after the execution of the 5th Guru and the compilation of Adi Granth in 1604 A.D.

Since the hand writing of manuscript No. 1245 is different from that of Bhai Gurdas, and the Adi Granth was undoubtedly written by him, the whole story of the manuscript No. 1245, being an earlier manuscript is proved to be fabricated. He says, "Bhai Gurdas, who may have further improved his hand writing by the time he wrote the final draft of the Adi Granth", (p.28). Does this observation make any sense ? As if, the first draft he wrote when he was a child.

"A comparative analysis of the earlier manuscripts (Goindwal Pothis and the GNDU MS 1245) and the Kartarpur *Sir* has revealed that Guru Arjan standardized the Gurmukhi script when he prepared the final text of the Adi Granth", (p. 32). It means Guru Arjan Dev used an underdeveloped script when he wrote M.S. 1245

(presumed by Dr. Singh) : and a developed one when he wrote *kartarpuri Bir*. Can there be a statement more funny than this ?

Kartarpuri Bir definitely was written earlier than M.S. 1245. In addition to the above mentioned points the following points further confirm this fact :

- (1) It contains editorial comments given by the compiler, that is, Guru Arjan Dev Ji. Dr. Singh himself writes, "The editorial comments in this manuscript, which are unique and quite revealing, are not to be found in any other manuscript" (p.28).
- (2) "The autograph of the sixth Guru is on folio 45" (p.29).
- (3) "The actual recording of the Mul Mantar is in Guru Arjan's hand" (p.29).
- (4) "The date of completion of the volume is recorded at the head of the Table of Contents as follows" (p.28) that is 1604 A.D.,
- (5) Guru Arjan Dev himself writes 'Sudh' (Correct, final) at a number of places in the *Kartarpuri Bir*.

In the face of such a factually solid evidence there remains practically no place for any doubt about the originality and the precedence of *Kartarpuri Bir*,

Dr. Pashaura Singh raises the issue of Guru Arjan Dev's adding a couplet in between the years 1604 A.D. and 1606 A.D. in the *Adi Granth*. In support of his argument he writes, "The use of a different pen and the absence of its mention in the index clearly indicate that this couplet was added after the compilation of the scripture in 1604 and before Guru Arjan's death in 1606", (p.32). The use of a different pen and the absence of its mention in the index is made out to be the reason for its later incorporation. Sikh historical chronicles amply record that Guru Arjan Dev, after completing the compilation of the *Adi Granth* brought it in a procession, in a royal manner, placed it on a higher platform and he himself sat at its feet. Second, right from the days of Guru Nanak, the 'Shabad' is adored like the Guru and Guru Arjan Dev anticipated the embodiment of that concept by Guru Gobind Singh Ji at Nander. Will he himself change it just to include only one of his couplets in it ? Do the above said two reasons justify

addition ? For it has already been shown that M.S. 1245 is a manuscript which was prepared much after the execution of Guru Arjan Dev Ji.

Therefore, once this fact is established that Goindwal pothis and manuscript 1245 were written after Kartarpuri *Bir*, the whole perspective of the thesis is changed because the entire treatment is factually and logically based on wrong presumptions and the incorrect proposition that M.S. 1245 was written earlier than the Kartarpuri *Bir*. Therefore, the whole structure of the thesis becomes baseless and unsustainable. Thus whatever he has discussed in the subsequent pages, given the correct perspective, proves otherwise. The thesis thus becomes an out-burst of an indisciplined mind and irrelevant by itself. The genealogical map on page 23 also becomes absolutely undependable.

On page 92 to 101, Dr. Pashaura Singh argues that Mul Mantar was framed by the manuscript writers before Guru Arjan Dev. He also believes that this Mul Mantar was arranged with the help of the words taken from the *bani* of Guru Nanak. This observation is contradictory. The Mul Mantar was written and arranged in the present form by Guru Nanak himself and, therefore, it is not the creation of the writers of Goindwal's pothis or manuscript No. 1245. In fact, the situation is clearly otherwise. This was written by Guru Nanak, Guru Arjan placed it, as it was, in the beginning of Adi Granth, and the later scribes, including those of Goindwal's pothis and M.S. No. 1245, because of diverse reasons, made changes. The above said two manuscripts are, in fact, the product of unknowing and motivated scribes and, therefore, are full of mistakes. Dr. Pashaura Singh himself writes, "Guru Arjan seems to have indicated that the ultimate source of all the *bani* is the Eternal Guru, who revealed himself through Guru Nanak and his successors", (p.101).

Thus, Dr. Singh accepts the claims of Guru Nanak and his successors that this *bani* is revealed one (Dhur ki *bani* ^ Khasam ki *bani*), that they are only the vehicle of communication and that their word is actually the word of God. This status of *bani* is undoubtedly accepted by Guru Arjan Dev himself. Historically speaking, we know that the 7th Guru punished his son by turning

him out of the house, because he, under fear or temptation, changed a word (that too verbally) while reciting *bani* in the Mughal Court of Delhi. Such a small alteration was not forgiven even to the son of the Guru, hi this situation, will Guru Arjan Dev, for that matter any devout Sikh, ever think of changing, improving upon or making interpolations in *bani* ?

Dr. Pashaura Singh insists that Guru Arjan Dev made changes in order to restructure the Mul Mantar and so many other hymns, thereby, implying that Guru Nanak and his successors wrote *bani* which required further corrections or improvements. This only Pashaura Singh can say, knowing fully well that this point of view could not stand the test of tact and logic.

Dr. Singh further says, "It should however be emphasized here that this revision is in keeping with both the rhythm and the meaning of the hymn", (p.21). I don't think that there can be anything more absurd than this observation; as it implies that Guru Arjan Dev earlier wrote something which was unrhythmical and meaningless. Clearly these changes were brought in by the later scribes.

Dr. Pashaura Singh's claimed linguistic modifications of certain words in a hymn are discussed from page 120 to 125 and change of the musical mode of a hymn from page 125 to 130. Similarly, his treatment about Guru Arjan's Ram Kali *bani* is discussed from pages 120 to 130. In fact, the whole of this chapter stands on the ill-conceived presumption that the variations took place either before the compilation of the Adi Granth or after it, between the years 1604-1606. It has amply been shown that both the presumptions are wrong. Hence whole of the chapter collapses. Since all these supposed changes appeared in the later versions, Goindwal's pothis and manuscript no. 1245, which he consulted, were prepared or copied from the original manuscript by the Hindalis or Minas, who have committed mistakes or brought in interpolations to serve their vested interests.

In order to prove his point, he wrongly associates authorship of the second hymn with Guru Gobind Singh. This opinion he claims to have formed on the basis of information contained, in the early manuscripts, (p.153). The myth of early manuscripts is

already exploded. The two hymns are undoubtedly written by Guru Teg Bahadur. Invariably, the theme of the second part of both hymns is identical, it is like this :

KAHO NANAK AB OAT HAR (I) GAJ(I) JEO HOH(U)

SAHAI.

NANAK SABH KICHH TUMRE HAATH MAIN TUM HI

HOT SAHAI

M.9, S.G.G.S.p. 1429

Therefore, on the basis of this version the issue of thematic continuity cannot be disproved. Moreover, such like observations prove lack of understanding of a piece of literature. This is further exemplified by another observation of Dr. Singh. He says, "Also this was time when he appears to have instructed his son to add his own *bani* to the Adi Granth for the sake of preparing the final text", (p. 153). There is a clear case of ignorance resulting in mischief by the author. He wants to prove that Guru Gobind Singh defied his father by not adding his *bani* except one hymn, in the Adi Granth. If he wrote and added this hymn to Adi Granth, he could also add more of his *bani* which he wrote in abundance. It should have been possible for him to add, if he wanted, especially when according to Dr. Pashaura Singh, he got the sanction of his father, the 9th Guru.

At many places, he writes sheer libel. He presumes that Gurus were in search of clients in order to put everyone in their basket. This is neither historically true nor logically acceptable, particularly when we know that in Sikhism there is no concept of conversion. Whosoever entered the door of Sikhism, did so mainly because of its ideological commitment in terms of its declared objective of being on the side of the oppressed. Its main objective was to make available freedom, equality and brotherhood to all human beings. But, let us have a look at this author's method of treating Sikh Guru being governed by mundane objectives. He writes that Guru Arjan deliberately got the *Bir* autographed by the Sixth Guru so as to ensure his succession (of Guru Har Gobind) in the wake of prevailing hostility, pp. 29-30.

The selection and fixation of the heroic tunes for the singing of the Vars of the Adi Granth was done for the "specific purpose

of attracting the rural people especially the Jats into the Sikh fold", (p.66).

In order to prove a hypothetical thesis about Mul Mantar, he contrives a very strange explanation. He argues that the word "Nirvair¹ (no enemy) was brought in the Mul Mantar by Guru Ram Das to "Counteract the situation of hostility in real life", (p.96).

Dr. Pashaura Singh writes that the placing of the Shalok in the end of Japuji Sahib was an attempt on the part of Guru Nanak "to institutionalize the office of Guruship to ensure its survival and permanence", (p. 108).

While discussing the placing of Guru Arjan's own Shalok before that of Guru Nanak, he argues, "It serves to underline Guru Arjan's claim that he carries the spiritual authority of Guru Nanak", (p. 147). It means that even after the tradition of generations and after serving the Panth for twenty-five years on the seat of Guru Nanak, he still had to prove that he carried the spiritual authority of Guru Nanak. Can there be a more non-sensical statement than this ?

About the inclusion of the Bhagat *bani* in the Guru Granth Sahib he argues, "Although Kabir is prominently represented in the Sikh scripture followed by Namdev, Ravidas and Shiekh Farid, eleven other figures from different regions and castes are given a token representation to justify the Sikh claim to universality", (pp. 174-75).

While writing about the use of Dakhni musical tunes Dr. Singh writes, "Their use in the Adi, Granth may perhaps be seen as symbolic expression of the Sikh claim to universality, which would embrace a southern audience", (p.200).

Attaching motives to every move of the Sikh Gurus amounts to distorting the facts and suggesting them to be nothing more than political mercenaries. Does it behave a scholar ? One who looks through coloured glasses, finds the same colour everywhere.

Some of Dr. Pashaura Singh's observations are really ^{Li} blasphemous and mischievous distortions. For example, while discussing the inter-relationship of the two hymns given under the authorship of Guru Teg Bahadur in Guru Granth Sahib, (p.1429), ^{Dr} Pashaura Singh concludes, "It may also reflect the contempo-

rary debate over the issue of Sikh identity : that is whether one follows the teachings of Guru Nanak and his successors contained in the Adi Granth or one joins the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh" (p.86). The suggestion that the two are different is a baseless attempt to divide Sikhism right from its foundation. He first builds a wrong hypothesis and then tries to make it believable by introducing distortions. Again, he says, Guru Arjan's frequently revising the received text along with other reasons was due to "Internal pressure created in the Sikh community as a result of disagreement over Guru Arjan's editorial policy also (p.74)". Neither there was any kind of internal pressure, nor there could be disagreement over Guru's decisions. The suggestion is a deliberate distortion.

Again while discussing Guru Har Gobind's resolve to fight the imperialist oppression by taking up arms against it, Dr. Pashaura Singh hypothetically presumes a situation in which he tries to say that Sikhs were divided over this policy. He writes, "Presumably these groups were still holding Sant beliefs and did not approve the shift towards militancy in the affairs of the Panth", (p.76). This tendency of Pashaura Singh to twist the facts shows his anxiety to please his mentor by becoming the mouthpiece of his shallow views that already stand blasted by scholars.

Within the Sikh Panth there had been no groups, nor on this ground could be, two groups.

These are only a few selected instances from a long list of deliberate distortions made to please his supervisor.

Similarly, Dr. Pashaura Singh is in the habit of making unwarranted comments. Just for example on page 12, he writes, "In designating his son-in-law as Guru, Guru Amar Das had 'bypassed' his own sons, Baba Mohan and Baba Mohri". Again, on page 108, he tries to prove that Guru Angad's Shalok was added to 'insure' the survival of Guruship. Probably, Dr. Pashaura Singh does not know the meaning of the words 'bypass' and 'insure', and of their inapplicability at least in the given context of spiritual merit for Guruship.

Throughout his thesis, Dr. Pashaura Singh makes uncalled for, wrong and distorted remarks which do not behove a scholar. Many

examples have been given above. Similarly he writes that Adi Granth was created as a text parallel to Vedas. Such statements only expose his ignorance and level.

Dr. Pashaura Singh very rarely touches upon the philosophical or ideological aspects of the *bani* in the Adi Granth. Even in his chapter 6, which should have been devoted to these problems, he side-tracks the main issue. On top of it, whenever he just touches upon these issues, he is wrong. For example, his explanation about the word 'Hukam' and 'Raza' is absolutely wrong. He further writes, "He stresses the functioning of the divine order (Hukam) in human affairs, which overrides the law of Karma", (p.6). In this explanation the relationship between Hukam and Karma is based on wrong interpretation. The 'Hukam' does not override the law of 'Karma'. On the other hand Hukam or His will is pressed into motion by God. Law of Karma is, in fact, not something which is separate or independent. There is no question of overriding of one by the other.

Similarly, while discussing Guru Arjan's hymn, he concludes that the appreciation of the contribution of the saints drawn from so-called low castes means Guru Arjan's attempt to attract the Jats into Sikh Panth, (pp. 173-74).

I don't know how one can form such far-fetched and hollow theories. Sikh Gurus genuinely believed that no one is lower or higher because of his birth. Each individual is equal in spirit and form and hence is the embodiment of the same elements. Therefore, whosoever achieves distinction by his actions deserves the appreciation of the Sikh Gurus. They appreciated the Saints drawn from so-called low-castes in this context. The attempt to divide the society into fragments and fix their estimation through this method was not the ideology of Sikh Gurus. They were genuinely interested in oneness of God and oneness of mankind and this was the core of their teaching. Second, this theory is absolutely wrong that Jats were attracted towards Sikhism only during or after the period of Guru Arjan Dev. For this purpose one cannot ignore the fact that even before Guru Arjan Dev, like other communities, including Muslims, Jats joined the Sangat of Guru Nanak and they continued to participate in its growth. In order to verify this point one has

to have a look at the list of Sikhs given by Janam Sakhis, and Bhai Gurdas and of the generals of Guru Har Gobind's forces. The attempt to divide Sikhism, on caste basis, however clever it be, could not succeed in history and this is not likely to succeed even now. It is so, precisely because in Sikhism ideological commitments throughout the struggle remained unchanged. It is not a sociological development. Sikhs, as individuals and also as a community, are bound by certain ideological considerations. Therefore, the understanding of Sikhism requires a deep understanding of the *bani* and its philosophy.

Dr. Pashaura Singh touches upon another theoretical point also. He refers to the status of Reality in Sikhism, particularly, in terms of God being personal and impersonal. Undoubtedly in Sikhism, God is one, formless and very dear. He is absolutely not unrelated. He is related to the extent that He intensely loves all beings, as a mother or a father loves his/her children. He shapes the destiny of his people like a teacher. He accompanies them through the difficult period like a genuine friend and He takes them across like a competent guide. On the whole, He is with His people in all and in every situation, being nearer than anything else. This can be possible only if He is formless. Therefore, Sikhism conceives of a God who is formless and is within each being at the same time. Therefore, the traditional perception of God, His being personal or impersonal, transcendental or immanent, Sarguna or Nirguna, does not apply to the concept of God in Sikhism. In a similar context, Dr. Singh comes to a very funny conclusion when he distinguishes between a personal Guru and a divine Guru (p.95). As if a personal Guru cannot be a divine Guru and divine Guru cannot be personal. This simply speaks of his poor understanding of the issues with which he is dealing.

Dr. Pashaura Singh begins his thesis with the point that the collection of *bani* was started by Guru Nanak himself. This point has already been established by Dr. Sahib Singh in his 'Sri Guru Granth Sahib Darpan'¹, (Vol. 3, pp. 803-828).

Height of his ignorance is amply displayed when he says, "In fact, the first complete vernacular commentary on the Adi Granth appeared only in the beginning of the century", (p.217). This

process started much earlier through interpretation of different streams (*Parnalis*) which he himself has mentioned in the subsequent pages. Here he takes a self-contradictory stand.

While discussing the editorial scheme of Guru Arjan Dev Ji, Dr. Pashaura Singh mainly depends upon two aspects. First he deals with different schools of criticism or interpretation available in Punjabi since its origin. The second aspect is locating the musical basis of the *bani*. The first part, as he himself admits, is borrowed from Dr. Taran Singh. And the second part is totally wrong. In his Raga organization of the Adi Granth, (p. 195), he makes indefensible mistakes which clearly shows that the author does not know much of the subject. It is true that Guru Arjan Dev arranged the major portion of *bani* in accordance with the Ragas in which that portion is prescribed to be sung. This factor is known to every one. But let us have a glance at how Dr. Pashaura Singh treats this subject :

1. While writing in the beginning of page 195, he says "The basic division of the middle section of the Adi Granth is according to ragas or melodic patterns". This cannot be called melodic patterns: These are melodic phrases or melodic notes. This is how the very beginning is wrong.
2. On the same page he observes by quoting his personal interview with Professor James Stephan, "Apart from the Sikh tradition the Asa Rag is now found in the musical tradition of Afghanistan and not in musical traditions of North India". Asa Raga is in fact very popular in Sikh tradition as well as in almost all the musical traditions of India since the days of Guru Nanak. In fact, many scholars are of the view that the Asa Raga is a local Raga *i.e.*, a Raga of this land (Panjab).
3. On the same page, 196, he has used the word "pure notes" for 'sudhang'. But these notes are neither pure nor impure. In music they are major or minor.
4. On page 197, he says, "Obviously he had intended to compile a scripture with a theological as well as musicological coherence in mind." Guru Arjan's theological concerns are evident but musicological one's are not the end in themselves. It is only a vehicle through which one

can reach at the meaning, the spirit, the inspirational part of *bani*. Therefore, the two cannot be equated.

5. On the same page, he has translated "Ragan Vich Sri Rag Hai" as "Sri Rag is chief among the Ragas". This translation is wrong and distorted mainly because the whole line is not kept in mind. In fact, Guru Amar Das accepts Sri Rag conditionally. Similar is the case with most of other Ragas also. They are accepted only if they help in reaching at the goal. The traditions in which Rag was the ultimate end, are, by now, lost to the dust of history.
6. In terms of the time theory of the music the emphasis is not upon Purvang or Uttarang, (p.199). It is on the common or Sudh Suar.
7. The Gharana cannot "be translated as 'family'. It has to be 'school', like Patiala school etc., (p.204).
8. On Page 202, he says, "This kind of classification is to be found in the Adi Granth Rag Mala", This is true that this classification is found in Rag Mala, but it is not applicable to the Ragas used in Adi Granth. In the Adi Granth the Ragni is not used. All the Ragas given in Rag Mala are not used. Similarly, all the Ragas used in Adi Granth don't find mention in Rag Mala. Unfortunately, in the above statement, Dr. Pashaura Singh tries to confuse the readers in terms of Adi Granth and Rag mala relationship. Obviously, the author of this thesis neither knows the spirit of the Adi Granth, nor the *bani* and Rag relationship in it; his technical expertise is out of question.
9. This can further be exemplified with a quotation from his thesis. On page 66 he writes, "There are other such poetic genres (ghorian, alahanian, birahara and paharc) which are modelled on the folk tunes in the Adi Granth". Now, these folk forms of poetry or folk tunes were there even before the Adi Granth. What Sikh Gurus did was a unique experiment. They prescribed these forms to be sung in classical music. For example, it is prescribed in Adi Granth to sing *ghorian* and *alahanian* in Rag Vandhans, and *Birahare* in Rag Asa. In fact, this was done by Sikh Guru to produce "balanced effect on the minds of both listeners and performers", (pp. 200-201). For this they brought the folk music under classical discipline and 'toned

down' the classical by singing them in folk tunes in order "to create a reflective mood".

Contradictions in statements, arguments, information and casual and unauthentic statements are the landmark of this thesis. Therefore, it is very difficult to draw any clear or useful information about any of the points made by the research scholar. He starts or concludes almost every point with the word : presumably, possibly, may be, seems to, etc., as if he himself is not sure about what he wants to say.

Another problem with Dr. Pashaura Singh and his supervisor Dr. W.H. McLeod is that both of them do not know the meaning of the words of *Gurbani*. And a still more serious problem is that without it, it is very difficult to understand the growth of Sikh history, Sikh institutions and Sikh doctrines. In order to overcome this difficulty Dr. Pashaura Singh takes refuge in "reader response", (p.210), theory of Schuyler Brown. He says, "McLeod is suggesting an approach that maintains that the process of unfolding the meaning of the Adi Granth text depends upon the level of the understanding of human beings", (p.210). But to their dismay this theory does not work in terms of understanding of *Gurbani*. This can be partially true in case of Vedas or old Testament because they are written in classical languages and also they do not support the growth of history. Such vague references to inapplicable ideas, while they could mislead western persons who are ignorant about *Gurbani*, but not those who understand something of it. Even otherwise, the inefficiency of a reader, particularly of a scholar, cannot be the responsibility of the text. The text has to be understood by genuine interest, labour and keenness to know more. I fear both the gentlemen are wanting in it. There is clear evidence to this effect in the present work.

As far as the quality of work is concerned manuscript No. 1245 and Dr. Pashaura Singh's thesis are almost identical in their performance, accuracy and level. Both are ill-logical and ill-supported, and are inspired by vested interests and a strong sense of vengeance. Both contain stray collections of material and ideas, "i many cases, copied from others and serve no meaningful purpose"^m academic compilation, research or ideological understanding. It

is beyond one's comprehension how such a baseless, absolutely irrational and apparently blasphemous attempt could be accepted as a Ph.D. thesis by a university of an advanced country or supposed to have been supervised by a teacher of Sikh studies. No one is to blame if reasons for doing so are unacademic. I am particularly pained to know that this gentleman was earlier a student of Gurmat College, Patiala, and a Granthi of a Gurudwara in Canada.

THREE

Dr. Harjot Singh Oberoi's book "The Construction of Religious Boundaries" is a comparatively new adventure in the realm of Sikh Studies. Its sub-title "Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition", prefaces the contents of the book. It suggests the nature of material collected, analysed and presented in it. To me it appears that sub-title of the book and the contents of the book are mutually contradictory. Because the sub-title suggests the positive angle of the Sikh identity whereas its treatment throughout the book belies this sense.

This book begins with a sense conveyed by two quotations from; Lucien Febvre, "Religion ? What a crude word you are using there ! Are you going to get tangled up in faith, belief and all that¹ ?" and Victor Turner "Otherwise we must at all perish, for behind specific historical and cultural developments, east versus west, hierarchical versus egalitarian systems, individualism versus communism, lies the simple fact that man is, both a structural and an anti-structural entity, who grows through anti-structure and conserves through structure."³⁹ These words seems to be his source of inspiration. Therefore, these two quotations sufficiently reveal the mind of the author. They also foreshow the things which he is likely to discuss in the subsequent pages of the book.

All that he wants to suggest is that no religion has its boundaries well-constructed. Second, all religions have some kind of looseness in its approach. For him boundaries are often illusory and; therefore, not sustainable. Going a step further he suggests religious boundaries should not be strict and unalterable

* An Academic scrutiny of Dr. Harjot Singh Oberoi's Book, The Construction of Religious Boundaries'.

These numbers indicate the page number of the book 'The Construction of Religious Boundaries'

meaning thereby that they should be adjustable. Mutual acceptance, tolerance and sharing of the same experience should be fundamental to every religion. This kind of thinking, left to itself, deserves praise. Actually, problem does not arise with the theme but with the product of "Scholars imagination".⁹ He continues to be unmindful of the empirical reality, even unfair to every religion, and, therefore, feels no hesitation in twisting, mis-interpreting and distorting the factual position. Thus, the approach becomes purely un-academic, sometimes motivated and un-related to the actual reality.

This book deals with the historical reality of Sikh religion during the 19th century. Dr. Oberoi has taken special pains to prove that Sikh religion, during this period did not have any well constructed boundaries. It had no central place for worship and in the process it had no well-defined identity. It had un-specified ideology and philosophy, unidentifiable identity and unfixed response of its followers to the idea of being a Sikh. The followers of Sikhism, that is the Sikhs were found to have a casual approach towards their deity. They were abundantly found joining the religious rites of Hindus, Muslims and a number of their sub-sects.

This kind of approach to the actual reality of Sikhism is not only casual in itself but well thought out distortion. First, there is no religious institution, worth the name, in the world, which does not have well-defined boundaries. Then, Sikhism is more identifiable than any other religion in terms of its ideological and philosophical framework and visible identity of its followers. Second, if some ignorant Sikhs or some members of the census staff commit a mistake, it cannot be made basis for determining that the boundaries of a religious community are 'fluid'.

Boundaries are a part of life. Every institution have constructed these around itself. They are mainly for the purpose of management, identification and self-satisfaction. Therefore, the real question should not be addressed to the boundaries of an institution, it should rather be addressed to the objectives of a religion, particularly, in terms of its ability to conceive and capacity to achieve them. But Dr. Oberoi has no such specified goal. He, on the other hand, tries to build his above said thesis on the

following points :

1. He quotes an elderly respected man Lala Ruchi Ram Sahni. According to the author Mr. Sahni used to go through the Sikh religious code (nit nem) as well as would worship the Hindu gods and also would never mind visiting a Muslim shrine.
2. He takes up the case of a Coolie who smokes Tobacco which is strictly prohibited by Sikhism. Having an unshaven beard does not necessarily mean a Sikh.
3. He refers to the tribe of Moharata Rajputs who were not clearly identifiable in terms of their being Muslim or Hindus or members of any other religion.
4. He draws his conclusions from the details of census conducted by British Government from time to time.
5. Dr. Oberoi is of the opinion that Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs would not mind undertaking pilgrimage and participating in religious functions conducted by each other, suggesting that even Islam has no demarcated religious boundaries. Let us see if the audacious doctor, who prefers to take undue liberty in making unwarranted observations regarding Sikhism dares to do so in the case of Islam. Further, he says, "Indian languages do not possess a noun for religion as signifying a single uniform and centralized community of believers."¹² As a result of these arguments he comes to the conclusion, "there was much inter-penetration and overlapping of communal identities".¹²

These and such like other arguments came up to be unsteady and unreliable, in substance, when they are academically scrutinised. For this purpose, these arguments can be divided into two sections : First some of the arguments relate to mutual policy of give and take (Lokachar) adopted by different religious communities, living in neighbourhood. There is no doubt that sometimes, within the parameters of above said behaviour, the number of immediate gains also determine such steps of an individual of a particular religion. The case of Mr. Sahni, of having equal interest in all the three religions falls in this category. The second category is those of aberrants who, due to ignorance, casualness and the social or

political pressure, commit aberrations. The case of Tobacco chewing or addicting oneself to any such intoxicant, prohibited in Sikhism, falls in this category. Sikhs are no exception so far as the existence of these categories are concerned. But, I feel, this parameter should not be applied in order to determine the religious boundaries of a particular religion. Like many other things in life, many a time, such things are committed out of habit, ignorance or for some greed. They are not sanctioned by the religious scripture. The interesting point is that he wants that the identity of a religious group should have been established from outside the realms of religious texts, say : Islam without Quran Sharif, Christianity without Bible and Sikhism without guru Granth Sahib. In this context he says, "Historically, it is hard to build a correspondence between the Veda and Hinduism, for at no point do the Vedas make the claim that they represent Hindus".⁵ If Vedas and Hinduism do not correspond to each other, then, he concludes that no other religious text responds to its respective religion. Can there be a more irrelevant argument ? Religion, actually originates from the texts and grows in the history of its followers. In order to understand a religious structure we have to go a little deep into a given perception of a religion. For example, let us take the case of a follower of Islam. A Muslim believes in one God (no idol-worship) observance of *Shariat* and a distinguishable physical identity. He does not worship in the way a Hindu or a Sikh does. His mode of prayer and conduct is entirely different. When he enters the doors of Islam, circumcision has to be performed. The difference between a Hindu and a Muslim, particularly in India, existed to the extent that if a Muslim touched the food and water of a Hindu, it was declared impure for consumption. The mutual distinction, sometimes lead to the mutual hatred and to subsequent clash. In this context, Hindus would call the language of Muslims : *Malecch Bhasha* which meant the speaker of that language was a Malesh (impure). Similarly, a Muslim would call a Hindu *Kafir* i.e. non-believer. Hindu would not go to the *mosque*. He would not conduct Namaz etc. and also he would not go through the rituals like a Muslim had to go. In this way a Hindu has his own concept of God, of worship, of character, of language and of ritualism.

May I know **how many Hindus observe fast, like Muslims in the month of Ramzan.**

Dr. Oberoi draws his conclusions mainly from the gatherings on the monuments of local heroes like smadh (tomb) of Guga Pir, Sakhi Sarvar etc. These gatherings can never be called religious gatherings.. Instead, they are cultural gatherings. Such people were never religious heroes. They were cultural heroes. The ignorants, in pain and distress, prostrate before them for help (little realising that their heroes have also suffered the same). No Hindu or Muslim or a Sikh while attending to such functions abandons his earlier religious connections.

As for the Sikhs are concerned, their identity is well-established since the days of Guru Nanak, He discarded both the churches *i.e.* Hindu and Muslim.

Guru Teg Bahadur, when learned about Aurangzeb's intention of building India into an Islamic state, he decided to assert the existence of an another religious identity that is Sikhism in addition to Islam and Hinduism. Sikhism believes in plural society. Therefore, diversity is an obvious and respectable phenomena. God has created his kingdom of living beings in multiple names, forms and colours. This multiplicity is the beauty and grandeur of nature and is created by God Himself. Therefore, it must be maintained. No individual, however, high he may be, on earth, has the right to dictate anyone else to follow his way of life. Freedom and equality, for all, is the fundamental principle of Sikhism. In this context, the existing churches had exhausted their possibilities. Therefore, an alternative was an obvious and urgent need of the tune. This decision to work for promoting freedom and equality, invited the wrath of the state. This in return promoted the assertion of separate identity of those who supported the above said values, 'he Sikhs had to undergo persecution for upholding the ideals, and unique. For example :

- 1- If a Hindu boy embraced Sikhism, he was declared to be as good as dead by his family.
- 2- When during the later Mughal period Sikhs suffered persecution, every time a Sikh was asked to declare himself a non-Sikh *i.e.* Hindu or Muslim, so that his life could be

spared. Besides the numerous other examples, the two events related to the Haveli (court yard) of Meer Manu and the persecution of army of Banda Singh Bahadur are clear evidence of this fact. If Sikhs were not committed to their identity, how come that they were massacred by the state. Their single declaration that they belonged to a faith other than Sikhism could easily save their life.

Even otherwise, Sikhism had its own ideological and philosophical base, its own social structure and its own religious ceremonies and identities. On the whole it had its own life style.

Sikhism is one religion which is determined by its continuing process in the ascending order. Unlike other religions, it has no concept or ritual for conversion. A person who joins the caravan of Sikhism has to continue the process till fulfillment. It is in this context that Guru Gobind Singh defines Khalsa who constantly, without any disruption, remains in struggle. When a person joins Sikhism, he is Sahjdhari. In the continuing process of ascending order he transforms himself into a Kesadhari and ultimately, he has to achieve the position of an Amritdhari. Sahjdhari is a beginner and the Amritdhari is the highest stage. Amritdharis who are regimented for a given cause are very few. All the three stages are of a Sikh. Therefore, the theory of a replacing (p. 25) is not applicable to Sikhism. In fact, no paradigm related to Sikhism was ever replaced. It is a continuing process and in the process, at several points of history, in response to the external reality, it got itself transformed. Since it is a continuing process, therefore, the process of joining and transformation is never closed. In feet, Sikhs are fundamentalists as well as contemporary at the same time. The concept of Panth Guru is an answer to this fundamental requirement of Sikhism.

The founding principles of Sikhism, which were laid down by Guru Nanak, in his *bani*, remained intact throughout the history. To this we can call the deep structure of Sikhism. Some of the institutions, from time to time, were evolved through and constructed on these principles Guru Gobind Singh endeavoured to give final touches to some of these institutions. These were in consonance with the concept of Guruship (Granth and Panth), the

concept of the character of the pure (Khalsa), concept and administration of Amrit, concept of Panj Pyaras and also the concept of unifying *meeri* and *peeri* into a single soul i. e. badshah Darvesh and Sant Sepoy etc.

The working of Dr. Oberoi's mind can very well be understood from his definitions at different stages. For example, when he defines Sahjdhari, he says, "A Sikh who neither accepts baptism into the Khalsa nor observes its code of discipline."¹² Does this definition not look funny? The question arises then how such a Sahjdhari is a Sikh? Similarly, he defines a Khalsa, "The Sikh order or brotherhood instituted by Guru Gobind Singh". Perhaps Dr. Oberoi does not know that the concept of Khalsa is in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. This word is used by Guru Hargobind and Guru Teg Bahadur in their rescripts to the Sikh Sangats and also by Guru Gobind Singh before he baptised the Khalsa with the Amrit, in 1699 A.D.

The actual position is as stated above, Sikhism is a continuing process in ascending order. The first entrants of Sikhism were Sahjdharis. Therefore, this section of me Sahjdharis continues till today. In fact, Sahjdharis are the source material for the Kesadharis and similarly, Kesadharis are the source material for Amritdharis. The fundamental principles, laid down by Guru Nanak in his *bani* and manifested through a number of institutions constructed by Guru Nanak and his successors are accepted by all the three sections of Sikhs alike. The fundamental principles are same and must for a Sahjdhari, Amritdhari and Kesadhari. Some of them are :

1. God for every Sikh is one and formless. Therefore, omnipresent and omnipotent.
2. Because He is formless, He does not take birth, therefore, the theory of messengers and Avtaras finds no place in the fundamental principles of Sikhism.
3. Therefore, no Sikh is expected to worship any idol of a God or goddess.
4. Sikhism believes that God is its Guru. He has revealed Himself through Shabd (word) Therefore, Shabd is its real Guru. Guru Granth Sahib contains Shabd and. therefore, Guru Granth Sahib is the Guru of Sikhs.

5. A Sikh will have no faith in good and bad omens, in spirits in auspicious or in auspicious days, etc.
6. Adultery and smoking constitute a grave breach of discipline (*bajr kuraihit*) in Sikhism.
7. Institutions like *langar*, *sangat* and *pangat* are same for all. This is irrespective of the category to which one belongs.

Therefore, when these principles are translated into social structure, every Sikh has to believe in the freedom and equality of mankind. No distinction of caste, class, colour, race or sex would find place in this structure "One father (God) and everyone else is His Child", is the underlying principle of Sikhism.

The meaningless pretentious structure of rituals which throughout the history had become a part of the narrow religious considerations was completely discarded by the founder of Sikhism. The real meditation is to touch a soul through another soul. Therefore, Sikhism has laid greater emphasis on the moral upbringing of an individual. A Sikh must be a morally sound person.

Then principles are common to all the three sections of the Sikhs as stated above. It is true that a *Sahjdhari* may not keep hair unshorn and like an *Amritdhari*, he is not under obligation to wear five Ks. But, his identity as a Sikh manifests through adherence to the above said fundamental principles, resulting into a firm belief and conviction that his final goal is that of being a *Amritdhari* Sikh.

Dr. Oberoi is of the opinion, "Early period Sikh tradition did not show much concern for establishing distinct religious boundaries".²¹ Further he says, "However, a dramatic change came about with the rise of the *Khalsa* in the eighteenth century; sections of the Sikh population now consciously began to push for a distinct and separate religious culture."³⁴ Dr. Oberoi's ignorance about the subject is well-established by this definition. It clearly seems that he has not gone through the *bani* of Guru Nanak, and the subsequent developments in the Sikh history. For example, *bani* of Guru Nanak and, particularly, *Asa Di Var* and *Majh Di Var* are very clear in demarcating the distinctiveness of his faith. He has elaborately dealt with exhausting of the possibilities of the

existing two great, rich traditions *i.e.* Hinduism and Islam. And at the same time, he initiates a new religious tradition which he himself defines in **Asa Di Var**, "Sikhi consist in learning and giving thought to whatever is learnt" p. 465. This religious faith is absolutely distinctive, not similar to Hinduism or Islam. So much so that Guru Nanak deliberates upon the new definition of a deity, a devotee, his cultural breeding and psychological make-up. A Sikh was forbidden to follow the life-style advocated by the other contemporary religions. Then Guru Arjun Dev very clearly asserts that the followers of his faith were neither Hindus nor Muslims. Bhai Gurdas has clearly and abundantly narrated the fundamental principles of Sikhism, the distinguishable Sikh way of life, the Sikh character and the duties of a Sikh. I do not understand which 'early-period Sikh Tradition' Mr. Oberoi is referring to.

Another surprising attitude of Mr. Oberoi is that he does not mind contradicting himself at every step. For example, "Above all, what kind of a spatial and temporal boundaries did they establish to create pan-local communities, and how exactly were these defined, perceived and activated ?²³ Look at the absurdity of Oberoi's observation who thinks of different boundaries for the Sikhs residing in other parts of the globe. In these lines, at least one fact which he clearly accepts is that boundaries were established. In fact, the construction and the attempt to demolish boundaries are never new. They are attempted at for the purpose of identification, management and self-satisfaction and sometimes for immediate gains too. My point here is only to bring out the inherent contradiction between the title of the book, the objective laid by the author and the meaning of the above said words. In this connection, three points need our attention :

1. Sikh and Khalsa are mutually identifiable since the days of Guru Nanak. It is only in the process of history that word Khalsa gained precedence.
2. The issue of separate identity and the construction of its boundaries was settled by Guru Nanak Himself. The subsequent history only made it apparent and functional.
3. Therefore, 'Nanak Panthis' and 'Khalsa' are neither mutually separate nor contradictory. The name and *bani*

identify the follower of Guru Nanak's faith and thus he is Kesadhari and his name is Sikh. Sahjdhari is a step behind and Amritdhari is a step ahead. An Amritdhari Sikh represents the humanly possible perfection in the model of a human being. This, in fact, is the unique beauty of Sikhism that its creation is secured by committing it to the ever continuing process.

But alienated mind of Dr. Oberoi is unable to align itself with the unmixed principle of Sikhism. Therefore, in the same context, he continues to say, "Unlike Nanak Panthis, the Khalsa wished to be viewed as a separate religious identity".⁸⁹ Viewed closely, this observation of Dr. Oberoi would make to believe that the Khalsa made a conscious departure from the Sikhs of Guru Nanak. This view is erroneous and is born out of the stubbornness of the author to see Guru Nanak as distinctly different from Guru Gobind Singh. His observation about Singh Sabha Movement is also self-contradictory. Further, he says, "A new cultural elite aggressively usurped the right to represent others within this singular traditions."²⁵ Writing in the same vein he further observes, "It gained currency because its dominant characteristics represented an unchanging idiom in a period of flux and change."

In the late 19th century, Dr. Oberoi's myopic vision sees the usurpation of other's religious rights forgetting completely that the Singh Sabha Movement was not the crusade by the 'cultural elite' as the learned doctor would like us to believe. It was, instead, a movement of the Sikh masses aimed at hammering the age old tradition of Sikh identity into the consciousness of the Sikh people. It gained currency because it bore the stamp of the Guru and was not the result of its happening during a period of 'flux and change'. The terminology used by the author matches the vagueness of his conception of reality regarding the Sikh tradition. Needless to say that the Sikhs were disheartened after the loss of political power in the middle of nineteenth century and the Singh Sabha made an earnest effort to help them to come to terms with themselves.

Dr. Oberoi has made another resounding reference about the Sikh faith. He says, "in the absence of a centralised church and an attendant religious hierarchy, heterogeneity in religious beliefs,

plurality of rituals, and diversity of life-styles were freely acknowledged"²⁴ 1" the above said words he has brought out three points. One that diversity of life-style was acknowledged fact in Sikhism. Second, that Sikhism pleads for plurality of rituals and third that this was because there was an absence of centralised church. About the first point, if we examine carefully, the *Gurbani* is clearly for a plural society. Therefore, Sikhism does not interfere in the diversity of life-styles. About the second point, Sikhism completely and strongly forbids ritualism. Therefore, the question of plurality of rituals does not arise. The third point that it has no centralised church, is a very funny point. Sikhism believes, as a fundamental principle, that everything seemingly good or bad originates from God. He is central point and any institution which placed Him in the centre cannot be without a centralised church. Sikhism does so, and it has given manifestation to this point of view through the construction of Harmandir Sahib (popularly known as Golden Temple). It is one religious place which is central to Sikhs and opened to everyone from every corner signifying the centralism as a core principle (of one God, one religion, one sacred scripture, one central place of pilgrimage) and diversity of life-style as a manifesting principle. I do not know whether there can be a more magnificent and systematic argument. Equally magnificent is Dr. Oberoi's ignorance about a well-settled fact of history. Then Dr. Oberoi himself contradicts this point. He says, "One of the early anecdotes in the Janam-Sakhi tradition tells of how Nanak was commissioned by God to launch his own distinct religious community in the world."⁵²

The central theme of this book is the diversity of behaviour in a religion. He asserts that this diversity was not limited to one religion. It was in all the three prevailing religions that is Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism. But, at the same time, he would not mind saying, "Historical texts are virtually silent about religious diversity". I fail to understand then where from he has got the central theme of his book. This is surely a self-defeating mission. Second, wherever Dr. Oberoi has found diversity, it is not a religious diversity. Actually this diversity is of religions and in the cultural patterns of the people living in the same area. Then Guru Granth

Sahib itself is a symbol of multiple diversity available in contemporary life.

Quoting Senapati, an 18th century poet, Dr. Oberoi writes, "On one side stands Khalsa and on the other the world."⁶² On the next page, he concludes, "Khalsa identity only became dominant in the late nineteenth century under British sponsorship"⁶³, which he means through the Singh Sabha Movement. This movement came in nineteenth century. He refers to a number of points through which he agrees that Khalsa identity was clearly, codified and promoted in eighteenth century. Then, the book deals with the religious diversities in nineteenth century. That is how, he has created a mess of the things by accepting the identifiable distinct Sikh identity through Senapati in 18th century and through Singh Sabha Movement in the 19th century. Then what about his main thesis ? Surely it has no ground to stand upon.

Above all he refers to the rise of Singh Sabha Movement as sponsored and nourished by British Government whereas the fact of the history is, and mis has amply been found in British records, that British Government feared only the Sikh revolutionaries, the product of Singh Sabha Movement. Then Singh Sabha Movement had attempted at reinforcing the religious code, which was the product of *Gurbani*. Their fault is that they did not deviate.

Dr. Oberoi again contradicts himself in his remarks on 25th, 26th and 63rd pages. First he says, "No other (than Singh Sabha Movement) reworking of the Sikh Movement has been so enduring and successful as the one worked out in the late 19th century." The suggestion is preposterous as it tends to suggest that the Sikh identity was 'worked out' and did not exist previously. On another page he says, "But in the 18th century the Khalsa Sikhs became keenly aware of the absence of the distinct life-style rituals and took urgent steps to rectify the situation by introducing new rites particularly to mark birth".⁶³

On page 76, Dr. Oberoi has detailed upon the difference between the Sahjdhari and Khalsa Sikhs. He emphasises upon the fact that both did not see eye to eye on any issue whether philosophical, social or relating to the code of conduct. This seems to be a product of author's fantasy. Because his treatment refers

to the contradiction not between the Sahjdhari and Khalsa but between the Sikh and non-Sikh. The tragedy with Dr. Oberoi is that he starts with the assumption that Sahjdhari is a non-Sikh. His description in the second para on page 77, confirms his above said stand. His misinformation is further confirmed by his statement about the role of Udasi sect, a sect of Sahjdhari Sikhs. Udasin "Signify renunciation of indifference to worldly concerns".⁷⁸ It is well recorded fact of Sikh history that Udasin played a significant active role in the history of north-India, particularly, struggle of the Sikhs. Baba Sri Chand himself was very active in the worldly affairs, sometimes even in political affairs of that time. When the Rajput hero Maharana Pratap was disheartened by his mostly unsuccessful and futile hostilities with the Mughals, he was given solace by him and inspired to rise up again by abandoning despondency. Baba Garditta, a heir designate of Baba Sri Chand, himself was a warrior. During the battles fought by Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh a number of Udasins participated in it. Probably, Dr. Oberoi is transplanting the image of a Hindu Udasin, to fit in the image of a Sikh Udasin.

Referring to almost every kind of source-material related to Sikhism, Dr. Oberoi's standard explanation is that this does not tell us a great deal about popular Religion. Then from where he has got the material for his insistence upon this kind of religion. To me it appears that there is no such thing as 'popular' religion', 'village religion', 'religion of the elite' etc. These are mis-nomers. Religion as such can never be divided into such categories. Every religion has its following in villages, in cities, in rich, in poor, in educated, in uneducated. Then he himself says that no source informs about such kind of religions available during this period. Then why making and issue out of non-issue?

If, as pleaded by Dr. Oberoi, no religion has definite boundaries, then, does according to him, a village religion or a popular religion has it ? Such formulations only speak of the weak edifice that Dr. Oberoi has built for himself.

In order to reach at a solution about the riddle of Sikh identity Dr. Oberoi elaborately seeks support from the Census report. The fourth chapter of the book begins with this objective. But at one

place he himself concludes, "Since no separate data on Hindu 'sects' was included in the 1881 census report, one cannot easily correct the distorted nature of Sikh returns."¹²¹¹ This means the source material, which he is using, represents a distorted picture of Sikh identity. Then how can it be dependable ?

Dr. Oberoi has committed a number of mistakes in his book, which ordinarily are not expected of a student of Sikhism much less of history. For example, while referring to the Amrit ceremony, he says, "All this was done to the recitation of five quatrains from the writings of Guru Gobind Singh".⁶⁴ It is a well-known fact that all the five *bani*s (compositions) were not from Guru Gobind Singh's writings. They are Japu Ji (of Guru Nanak), Jaap, Swaye and Chaupai (of Guru Gobind Singh) and anthologies including other Guru's *bani*.

At another place, he says, "Most of them lived in the Doaba, where Dera Baba Nanak in Gurdaspur was traditionally regarded as their headquarters".¹¹⁵ Dera Baba Nanak and Gurdaspur are not part of Doaba, they are in Majha.

Referring to Baba Budha Ji, he says, "He was contemporary of seven Sikh Gurus and installed four of them to Guruship."¹¹⁸ This statement carries two historical mistakes. One, Baba was contemporary of six Sikh Gurus and second, he installed five of them to Guruship.

A cursory look at the way he translates the phrases again reveals the mind of the author. He translates 'Vahe Guru Ji Ka Khalsa Vahe Guru Ji Ke Fateh'⁶⁴ into "Hail to the Guru's Khalsa ! Hail the victory of the Guru !" The correct translation should be, 'Khalsa is of the Guru/God. Victory (of the Khalsa) also belongs to Guru'.⁶⁴ Similarly, at another place he translates Gurmat as "The view of Guru", ¹²⁸ whereas it should be the 'philosophy of Guru'. A Sikh is translated as disciple⁵⁹ whereas it should be a 'student or a learner'. This speaks of the casualness towards or the lack of understanding of the word of *Gurbani* or Sikh tradition.

Dr. Oberoi's attitude towards basic principle of Sikhism is very casual. This tendency is well-reflected in the choice of his words. For example, he would say, "The greatest taboos with Sikh

Tradition".³ Not only this he uses the word 'categories'⁴ for Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, apparently it is in place of religion.

He says, "Singh Sabha, a wide-ranging religious movement, began to view the multiplicity in Sikh identity with great suspicion and hostility".²⁵ Probably the gentleman has not cared to see an entry on page 103 and a photo on page 519 of Mahan Kosh (p. 1960), written by Bhai Kahan Singh, a great exponent of Singh Sabha Movement. He refers to nine forms of Sikhs. Suspicion and hostility are the product of writer's mind only.

He says, "A new cultural elite aggressively usurped the right to represent others within this singular traditions".²⁵ Can in such an age and also in such an area of work, anyone aggressively usurped the right of any group ?

Similarly, the definition of Khalsa is wrong. Dr. Oberoi, quoting Dr. I.S. Grewal believes that it is derived from the concept of "lands that were under the direct supervision of crown".⁵⁹ Khalsa means pure and as stated above in Sikh literature, a Sikh was known as Khalsa much before the Vaisakhi of 1699. Second, a large majority of those Sikhs, who did not go for Amrit were also under the direct supervision of Guru. No one was appointed to look after them or supervise them, like the lands, which were not directly in the supervision of crown.

He says, "While the Sikhs in their recent history, have tended to treat Punjab as their home-land, they did not belong exclusively to Punjab; they were settled all across India".⁴² Mr. Oberoi does not know the difference between the home-land and land of settlement. Home-land of the Sikhs means, the native land, the land of birth of Sikhs, or Sikhism. Therefore, if he is now settled in Canada, it does mean that Canada is the home-land of Sikhs. Similarly, on the next page, he tries to identify the importance of Majha region on the basis of the Sikh population living in this area. The concentration of Sikh population in Majha is not more than in Malva. But even if it was so, the importance of Majha was not simply because of the concentration of Sikh population. It was important for the Sikhs, because the Central place of the Sikhs (which is dearer to them even to their life) is located in this region.

Comrades in arms, fellow soldiers or workmen of Baba Banda

Singh Bahadur are mentioned as "his major collaborates".⁷²

Gurmata is described, "The ritual", p.74.

Amritdhari Sikhs are described as, "Initiated Sikhs", p.64.

Similarly, the use of words; paradox, duality, p.71, allies, alliance, p.81, worship before Guru Granth, p.125, corpus of Sikh myth, p. 130, sect, cult, p. 196 and many more speak about author's inability to have grip over the culture of words. Oberoi should be questioned regarding the use of such terminology' ?

Dr. Oberois is in the habit of delivering, passing judgements even about the very serious matters also. For example, he says, "The new print culture brought Sikhs together as never before".⁴⁷ It is debatable whether the so called 'print culture' has really any bearing on bringing the Sikhs together. It may well be argued that the opposite has happened. Many forces inimical to Sikh culture have benefitted more from this culture, as is evident, especially after the loss of state power after the death of legendary Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Then by implication this means the Sikhs were never together before the arrival of the 'print culture'. The author is here ignoring even the historical facts relating to the origin and growth of Sikhism. Their very survival through the ever hostile process of history is in itself a proof of their unified act.

Again on the same page, he says, "In conventional histories of the evolution of Sikh tradition it is common to treat the rise, spread and consolidation of Sikhism as a single unitary whole. Such a narration, like much else in academic discourse, seeks to dispel disturbing contradictions and synthesizes Sikh experience in order to give it coherence. By this means the Sikh past, to use Nietzsche's illuminating term, is made 'painless' for the minds of those who seek to live by it."⁴⁷ By implication this means that Dr. Oberoi, while ignoring the factual position, is trying to make the Sikh experience 'painful'. Probably it gives him pleasure.

While quoting Dr. S.S. Hans, he says, "Increasingly, the word *gurmukh* came to be identified with Sikhs alone, and non-Sikhs were called *manmukh* (self-oriented)".⁵¹ Throughout the Sikh period, nowhere a non-Sikh is called *manmukh*. In fact, *gurmukh* and *manmukh* are two terms giving the contrasting meaning,

relevant only in the fold of Sikh Studies. Therefore, this is the product of the imagination of a particular category of scholars; in the past and present.

Dr. Oberoi says, "Janam-Sakhi is the name given to mythical narratives on the life of Guru Nanak".⁵²

Janam Sakhis are not a piece of mythical narratives. On the other hand, it is a piece of literary work. Guru Nanak, throughout his *bani*, has tried to de-mythify the human consciousness.

Similarly, again referring to the Janam-Sakhi literature, he says, "As a consequence, there is no fixity to Nanak's image in the Janam-Sakhi stories : much like Puranic gods and goddesses, he is always transforming and wandering".⁵⁵ In fact, each word of the whole Janam-Sakhi literature moves around the image of Guru Nanak. He is the only central figure, that is hero of the whole Punjabi Janam-Sakhi literature. Second, his movements are not similar to those of Puranic gods and goddesses. He, throughout his life, keeps his feet placed in the culture of the soil. Third, his attempt at transforming and wandering does not de-fixify the image of Guru Nanak.

Again, he repeats his figment of imagination in the words, "Just as there is no fixed Guru Nanak in the Janam-Sakhis, there is no fixed Sikh identity in the early-Guru period".⁵⁶ Yes there is no fixed Nanak for those who stubbornly refuse to see the reality or go by the argument.

Dr. Oberoi on pp. 54-55, has tried to argue that Adi Granth was not the first attempt of its kind. Another manuscript which he names Fatehpur manuscript was edited about 21 years before the compilation of Adi Granth. He has not produced any evidence to this effect. But it seems, even here, he could not contain his impulse for passing on unauthentic judgement, unworthy of a scholar.

Dr. Oberoi says, "While there is no denying the fact that the Adi Granth has become a key cultural marker of Sikh authenticity, it would be a gross mis-interpretation to view it in the same vein for the early seventeenth century. Its heterodox textuality and diverse contributors were far more the manifestation of a fluid Sikh identity than a signifier of exclusivity".⁵⁵ According to him because

there are 'diverse contributors', therefore, it impaired the exclusive Sikh identity. Diversity is fundamental principle of nature. Sri Guru Granth Sahib has not only exemplified it, but preached it, knowing fully well that ultimately every diverse element of nature is not only connected, but placed in its base which is always unified single Being. Basing on this model, Guru Arjun Dev compiled the *bani* of the contributors of Sri Gum Granth Sahib. Therefore, the visible diversity springs out of the single unified base and in the process returns to it. Thus, it seems to be the argument of a person who knows very little about the core of the issues.

Dr. Oberoi while quoting a Janam-Sakhi says, "One Janam-Sakhi episode relates the story of a highly impoverished Sikh who, in his efforts to buy food for Guru Nanak and his companion, cuts and sells his long hair".⁵⁶ He, like his mentor Mr. W.H. Mcleod, referred on p. 49, has misunderstood the real purport of the Sakhi. It absolutely does not mean that Sakhi is giving relaxation for cutting the hair. Sakhi means, serving the guest is dearer to a Sikh than everything else. Therefore, for serving a guest a Sikh can sacrifice the dearest of his possession. In this context it is hair. It may be remembered that Gurus have been subjecting the Sikhs to various tests to ascertain their unflinching faith in the religion of Guru Nanak. Guru Angad, before being offered the Guruship, was once asked by Guru Nanak to eat a corpse. Only an ignorant would have us believe that it amounts to Guru Nanak asking the Sikhs to eat dead bodies.

Dr. Oberoi says, "Taking the last line as the key to this hymn, many have argued that Guru Arjan is proclaiming here that Sikhs are neither Hindus nor Muslims, and therefore form a distinct religious community. There are several textual problems with this reasoning. As pointed out by Sahib Singh, the most eminent Sikh exegete of this century, Guru Arjan wrote this hymn in a definite context; he was responding to an older verse by Kabir, included in the *Adi Granth*".⁵⁷

First, Oberoi is trying to distort the meanings of this line, 'I am neither Hindu nor Muslim'. Second, if it was written in a given context while responding to an older verse of Kabir, it makes the proclamation all the more meaningful. This means he was making

the things abundantly clear. Third, where is the need to prove otherwise?

Dr. Oberoi says, "Just as in traditional Indian thought each *varna* is supposed to perform its dharma or moral duty, the Khalsa brought forth its own dharma".⁶²⁻⁶³

One Khalsa does not believe in Varna-Ashram. Second, it does not believe in fixing the duty according to Varna. Third, Khalsa is brought in by bringing the people of different Varnas into one single unit, thereby attempting at demolishing the caste-ridden society. But, Oberoi insists that the institution of traditional Varna ashram and that of Khalsa is similar.

The above stated are only a few examples. Otherwise, this tendency of passing judgements is frequent throughout the text of this book.

Similarly, Dr. Oberoi is little conversant with the basic issues in Sikhism. For example, he inter-mixes Sikh and Punjabi on p. 33. He has taken special trouble to contradict Dr. G.S. Dhillon's four points on p. 33-34, though his attempt to contradict him is baseless and unconvincing. So much so he himself commits the mistake for which he reprimands Dr. Dhillon. He expects Dr. Dhillon to deal with the issues according to the model given by him.

The ego of the writer is so exalted that in the end of his introduction, he says, "Sikh Studies needs to be fully open up to the cage of history", as if before and after Dr. Oberoi nobody has done it. Whereas the fact of the matter is that most of the material found in this book is found in earlier treatises on Sikh Studies, particularly, written by Dr. J.S. Grewal, and his prospective heir; W.H. Mcleod. Dr. Oberoi has only collected their unfounded formulations and put them together in the form of this book. Thus, this book is only a collection of material, unoriginal and of course is unintelligently arranged, aimed at serving a particular end.

FOUR *

Sri Akal Takht is constantly under discussion since the time of its inception. The arrival of Britishers had made this discussion more serious. A number of scholars have challenged its doctrinal base, constitutional existence and historical role. In the recent years this debate has taken a more serious turn. Sometimes it seems that a sinister mechanism, promoted by a number of agencies, is seriously concentrating upon this institution. Their objective seems to be to give a diversion to its total historical perspective.

The issue of unity of religion and politics in Sikhism is being treated by its critics as an erroneous interpretation of the fundamental principles of Sikhism. I think a close study of the *bani* of Guru Nanak leaves no one in doubt that not only religion and politics but all aspects of life are given a synoptic view. Guru Nanak firmly believes and propagates that no aspect of life can be segregated from the total complex of life. A human life is a wholesome being which includes social, political, religious and economic aspects of life to make it a whole life. None of it can be segregated, at any given time, particularly by those who plead for a satisfying life for each individual; in every society.

This stand of Guru Nanak is in consonance with his fundamental view of life. He believes that the life-style of an individual and also its social and political relations should be determined in the perspective of natural/cosmic laws. The nature has produced an individual as a wholesome being. Accordingly his/her life can be more satisfying and hence comfortable. The process of segregation whether in individual life or social or political set-up is promoted by the interests, particularly of the rulers whose interests are otherwise. So, there is a clear demarcation between the two approaches. One is given by nature and another is given by the

* An Examination of irresponsible Statements on Sikh Polity.

man, particularly, a ruler. Sikhism opts for the former view of life. Therefore, it is against segregating any aspect of an individual's life from its wholesome being. The principle of the unity of religion and politics particularly in Sikhism, therefore, actually is a point which is deliberately being perceived from a narrow angle for the purpose of bringing it under debate. Keeping in view this background, those who opt for the state's point of view, they actually tried to bring in its wholesome character, a dissection so that its inspiring uniqueness can be razed to ground, relegating it to the heap of the past.

Keeping in view the above *milieu* the seat of Akal Takht is brought under debate, The first point is made out that Akal Takht is a symbol and not a seat from where the instructions can be issued. Still Akal Takht is a seat or a symbol of a seat, it matters little. The fact is that Akal Takht is an existing reality, a historical institution which is given a role by the Guru to play The role is to promote the wholesome concept of life. If we go into a little detail, we find that Akal Takht is the creation of the defiance against the oppressive state orders. We know Jahangir, the ruler, issued a number of orders aimed at dividing the society on communal lines, giving preferential treatment to the members of one religion over the members of other religion. He also attempted at demoralising the second category of the citizen *i.e.* Hindus to the maximum. Through enacting certain laws they were clearly told that they had no right to a honourable civil life. They were humiliated and treated like an animal. Now this violation of human form did not fit in the ideological commitment of Sikh Gurus. Guru Hargobind, in this context, raised the voice of dissent against whatever was being attempted and for asserting the God's sanction for human rights, being violated by the State through unnatural laws. The State wanted a non-muslim not to raise any religious place, not to keep army, not to raise any fort, not to go for hunting, not to wear a particular type of turban, not to have beard, and not to have a particular type of horse or weapon. Guru Hargobind did whatever was thus prohibited. Pronouncing that it was his or everyone's birth right and no individual had the right to suppress it The raising of Akal Takht thus has a temporal context. If Delhi

had a throne, Amritsar had a throne of God, that was a throne which symbolised higher values of life. The higher values include the spiritual values also. In fact, the temporal values here are given a spiritual base and thus are raised to the standard of higher values. Human action has been provided an amount of sanctity through the authority of Akal Takht.

Thus the raising of Akal Takht is not an attempt to separate the temporal from the spiritual, but it is an attempt to give a spiritual base to the temporal, thereby indicating that they are, inseparable. The historical emergence of Guru Panth at the time of Guru Gobind Singh is based upon this principle which supported the concept of wholesome life given by Guru Nanak. Guru Panth is not something different, something other than Guru Granth. Guru Granth contains the word, the spirit and the spirit is abstract in nature. The historical Khalsa required someone to guide its onward march, particularly, because it was passing through a period of serious struggle. Guru Gobind Singh, keeping in view this need of Khalsa, gave Guru Panth as the Guru of the Khalsa to provide the necessary guidance. Now it clearly means that the abstract Guru got itself transformed into historical Guru in order to play a historical role. The conceptual frame-work of this transformation was again provided by Guru Nanak himself; while giving the inter-dependant relationship between the Guru (Shabd) and the Sangat that is Panth. Therefore, Guru Granth and Guru Panth are not two different entities. They are one, Granth is the abstract base of the concrete institution and the Panth has given a historical role to the abstract reality. Actually, this is a case of transforming of the Shabd (spirit) into congregation that is Panth. Second, the Panth is expected to represent Shabd by functioning strictly in accordance with the spirit given by Guru Granth that is Shabd.

The dichotomy is further sought to be created between the single authority that is Jathedar of Akal Takht and collective authority that is of Guru Panth. This attempt again is erroneous in nature. Jathedar represents the authority of the Akal Takht delegated to him through Khalsa Panth. Therefore, they have to be seen in the consequential order. Akal Takht is represented by Guru Panth and Guru Panth is represented by Jathedar. When

someone is given the authority to use powers then he has the right to use them. Even the highest in a country are delegated with some powers. Power does not originate from an individual whether one is King, President or Prime Minister of a country or similarly holding the highest office of any other institution. The power springs from the people and is always delegated to such authorities. In the present case the power is of the Akal Takht, represented by Panth and delegated to Jathedar in order to supervise or control the historical progression of the kaum (community). When Panth is committed to the cosmic view of life which means the principle of Sarbat Da Bhala (well-being of everyone), they must be true to it. This principle of Sarbat Da Bhala has also to be implemented by the Panth through the platform of the Sikhism and for the well-being of all. Therefore, Jathedar is within his right to act.

Another objection is raised by bringing in the process of his nomination. It is said that because he is nominated by SGPC, following a certain procedure, therefore, Jathedar is subject to the discipline of SGPC and hence not supreme. This again is an erroneous interpretation. I am conscious of the fact that SGPC is created by a constitutional provision given by the temporal authority. Even then in some form or the other SGPC represents Panth. Then it is panth who through SGPC nominates Jathedar which means Panth delegates its power to Jathedar and hence he is justified in using it.

Another point is raised that when SGPC nominates Jathedar, how he can be over and above SGPC itself ? In the historical progression of Khalsa, there are a number of examples which can be quoted to support and justify the Panthic point of view in this connection. But, let us take the case of contemporary secular reality in order to prove our point. A President of a country is nominated, elected or selected directly or indirectly by the people of a country. But when he becomes the President he becomes the first citizen of the country. Similar is the case with Prime Minister or Chief-Justice or heads of certain institutions with limited sphere. Therefore, the dichotomic approach followed by challenges, to the different institutions and authorities in Panth, cannot be proved from the angle of the principles of life given by Guru Nanak.

Babe Ke (house of Guru) and Babar Ke (house of rulers) expression is used first by Bhai Gurdas in his *varan*, and then by Guru Gobind Singh in his 'Bachitra Natak'¹. In this way, this expression was in currency even before Guru Har Gobind Sahib came on the scene. Both appear on the Indian scene at the* same time. Both came into conflict with each other right at the very beginning at Emnabad (Punjab). Babar Ke represented the invader, tyrannical, the head of the oppressive machinery. Babe Ke represented the spirit of resistance. As a result of Guru's resistance against the all-round destruction caused by Babar's invasion, the first conflict took place. Babar Ke submitted to the human or spiritual way of life and they abandoned their oppressive policy. In this process Babe Ke not only supported the human cause but influenced the process of creating a human view of the given political state. But, when Jahangir came on the scene, he reversed the policies of the State and brought in similar tendencies which were existing in the Indian political set-up before the arrival of Babar. The fundamental commitment of Babe Ke is to side with the oppressed and to uphold the dignity of human existence by providing them the required honour and support. They were under commitment not to compromise on this. Therefore, Guru Har Gobind had to stand up, arm his Khalsa and fight the oppression pervading throughout the country. Therefore, Babe Ke and Babar Ke do not symbolize the segregation of religion and politics at all, much less at the hands of Gurus. On the other hand, they symbolized the policies of the two houses, the importance of the two houses for each other and also to prove that how two houses mattered throughout whether as friends or foes. So they represented two historical realities which played their given role in the history of India. They do not even remotely explain the segregation of religion and politics.

From the above discussion, it is clear that Akal Takht is an institution, only committed to defend the rights of the oppressed. This is a historical role and it has to be played in a given historical reality. May be the state, by its nature, will continue, as in the past, to violate the fundamental human rights. Thus the problem gets an element of eternity. But even then, though the problem is eternal,

et it is not devoid of a historical context. Eternity here means the consistency and continuity in the violation of human dignity and the need for a continuous struggle against this tyrannical act. Thus Akal Takht is in no way an institution which is transcendental in its nature and sphere of activity. It has been, created to meet the challenge of the ground reality and this challenge, Akal Takht has faced in appropriate terms throughout its life.

The second aspect of the critic's formulation is that Akal Takht is an institution of the Panth, the whole of the Sikh Panth, and not of a particular section that is of Akalis. Still further they are of the opinion that since Sikhism believes in a cosmic society and they daily pray for the well-being of everyone, therefore, the supporting character of Akal Takht should also be available to everyone.

In order to push forward their point of view, which is not explicitly wrong, sometime they don't hesitate even to use regrettable language. For example, in such a situation, they say that it is Akal Takht and not Akali Takht. Upto this extent this observation seems to be correct. But, when we apply some principle to this observation it crumbles down.

I am not going to hold any brief for Akalis and I don't say that they represent or they stand by or they preach the values of life given by *Gurbani*. But one thing should be clear that a person or a leader or a group of persons or leaders can be wrong. Therefore, we have to go to the ideological depths in order to bring out the real position of a given situation. The given situation is that India is a multi-national country. It has a large number of religions, cultures, ideologies, variations held by different people. In its attempt to assimilate them into one nation, the so-called national parties of India are sparing no stone in suppressing their regional aspirations. The fairness demands that these parties, when in power, should have provided their support to the regional aspirations, allow them a reasonable independent growth in order to live their life in the way their culture, their religion and their history provide for. But this could not be. All the so-called national parties have ruled India at one or the other time. In this respect, the role of every party at the centre, is absolutely similar. Therefore, for example, when a Sikh or a Tamil joins a so-called national party

and if he holds some influential position in it he or she, according to the given policies of the so-called national party, begins to suppress and destroy the regional aspirations of his own people. This is the parameter which should be applied to the Sikhs working in the Akali Party and in the so-called national parties. Akalis are the symbol of regional aspirations thereby human aspirations. The so-called national parties, their leaders and even Sikh allies are the symbol of suppression of the regional aspirations hence human aspirations.

hi this context, a Sikh who joins a so-called national party symbolises the mechnation which directly and enthusiastically suppresses the regional aspirations that is the Sikh aspirations. Sikhs who are human-beings and hold a different way of life, a different ideology, a different cultural base, a different religion, absolutely have a right to live according to their own principle of life. But the so-called national parties and their agents do not allow them. Now in the purely natural and humanistic perspective, Akal Takht, as a matter of its commitment, and performed historical role, has to be on the side of the oppressed, has a right to struggle for them. This is the perspective and I think, it is not difficult to be understood. Therefore, truly Akal Takht is not of the Akalis only. But it is of the suppressed people. In the given situation Sikhs are the suppressed people. Only Akalis represent the suppressed Sikhs. The Sikh members of the so-called national parties, represent the machination of suppression. I appeal to my academic friends to view the authority of Akal Takht Jathedar by placing him in this situation. To punish the one who deviates from this principle is thus fair or unfair ? The deviator is definitely a greedy Sikh who, against the principle of Sikhism, joins the oppressive forces, causes wounds to the Sikh psyche and works for promoting his selfishness. Does such a Sikh not deserve punishment (Tankha) ?

hi the recent times, another threat is being held out to the Jathedar of Akal Takht. This threat is based on the recent judgement of the Supreme Court which ordered that religion and politics should be separated. The Government of India, broadly speaking, the so-called national parties are supporting it. My question is that, is this legislation not against the genuine aspirations

of the regional population ? If Sikhs held their religion and politics integrated since five hundred years, it has played a significant role in the history of India, particularly in protecting the oppressed, and it is their natural basic right, how comes the Supreme Court to order them to separate it ? If Sikhs are convinced that their centuries old unified way of life or a wholesome way of life is conducive to their growth, their spiritual and temporal aspirations and still if supreme Court says that you must separate it, is it not an act of suppression ? And the tragic part of it is that the Supreme Court, the highest seat of Justice, is working as an organ of State mechination which is used to suppress the regional aspirations. The most tragic part of it is that ancestors of the present rulers, for centuries, themselves suffered an oppression of the worst kind. History holds a number of lessons for them if they want to learn.

FIVE *

Sikhism : Doctrine Issues and Institutions :

Right in the beginning, I feel honoured in expressing my deep sense of gratitude to the managers of the Indian philosophical Congress, particularly, the most beloved Chairman Professor K. Satchidananda Murty, the members of the Executive Committee and of the General House, for showing such a magnanimity in electing me as General President of the 67th Session. Honestly speaking, and in fact, I have no words to express the magnitude and the depth of my feelings of gratefulness due for you all. I am genuinely conscious of the fact that this honour signifies only your large heartedness.

Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion was born in 1469 A.D, Nine Gurus succeeded him. Finally, in 1708 A.D. Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th Master declared Guru Granth Sahib to be the Guru of the Sikhs in future. Since that day, the word, the light, contained in Guru Granth Sahib, is the Guru of the Sikhs, a guiding principle of their destiny.

By the time of the birth of Guru Nanak, the Indian society at the time was in peril. Guru Nanak himself refers to it in his Bani, He says.

1. The kings have become butchers,

The righteousness has flown away.

Thus the Kalyug (dark age) has become a dagger.

The Amavas (the darkest night) is prevailing.

The moon of truth is not seen anywhere.

M.I, S.G.G.S., P.145

Address of the General President of the 67th Session, of Indian Philosophical Congress held at Trivandrum (India) 8-10, January, 1993.

The kings have become hunters and the courtiers their dogs.

They pounce upon the peaceful (sitting and sleeping) people.

And lick up their blood and biles (entrails).

M.I, S.G.G.S., P.1288

2. The *Kazi* tells lies and thus eats filth,
The Brahman takes bath and still kills the living ones.
The blind Yogi does not know the way.
All the three are like a fence which eats up the crop.
M.I S.G.G.S., P.662

3. Nanak :What kind of world has become? There is none left to be guide or friend. The brotherly, friendly relationship (of love) is wanting. They have sacrificed faith over wealth.

Salok Varan Te vadhik M.I, S.G.G.S., P.1410

This is only for example. Otherwise, references to political corruption, exploitation, oppression and discrimination, religious hypocrisy in the form of contentless ritualism and renunciation of the social responsibility and complete decline in social morality are in large number. Guru Nanak could not reconcile with this totally decayed society and he decided to cure it by re-modelling its ethos. After a careful examination of The contemporary Indian society and also after deep reflection upon the problems, Guru Nanak came to the conclusion that :

- 1 . Indian society was divided into several sections in the name of different codes of conduct. The advent of Islam further added to this multi-religious Indian society.
2. Each section had its own God,
3. Each section was claiming that only their God was Supreme.
4. This situation resulted in division of society into several fragments, thereby creating many boundaries.
5. The claim for superiority promoted mutual clashes.

After this conclusion he pondered upon his future plan of action. He decided to forego his worldly comforts and to enter into the practical field to reach for the solutions to the above said problems. Accordingly unlike his contemporaries, he set out to travel throughout India and some cities abroad. This he did for about 20 years. He visited the religious centres of Hindus, Jains, Bodhis, Jogis, Muslims (*at Macca and Madina also*) including sufis and many more obscure cults. He opened a personal dialogue with the head of these centres. He firmly believed, "Till we live in this world, we must listen something and say something"¹. This means, first he opened the mutual communication between himself and others and between one and another. Second, he tried to eradicate the grounds due to which mutual clashes were growing. He declared that there was only one God and He was same for all. Thus question of having a separate and different God was closed for ever. He further declared that this God was formless, thereby reducing chances of clash over the form or a consideration for separate God. He is creator, the father and the mother of all. This means he loves everyone in equal terms and with endless limits. Therefore, discrimination, deprivation and division in society was unprincipled. Third, through these contacts and framing of issues, he organised what we now call Indian Bhakti Movement. This movement could only be organised on common grounds and with physical contacts. These were provided by Guru Nanak to this movement in order to awake, to aspire and to overthrow the internal and external shakels of oppression. This struggle for breaking up all the boundaries, at once, brought him up as a hero of the different groups of people. So much so that even during his life time he came to be known as :

"Nanak Shah Faqir,

Hindu Ka Guru Musalman Ka Pir".

Sikhism grew in a systematic manner. Guru Nanak laid down almost all the principles which were to be followed by his successors. Therefore, the institutions which played important role in the formation and progress of Sikhism, were conceived and demarcated by Guru Nanak himself. His ideological commitments were carried forward by his successors. His weapons continued to

remain indispensable part of the Sikh struggle throughout. While responding to the external reality, other weapons were added to the basic weapons from time to time. Sikhism grew in complete unity in its ideological principles, the emergence of various institutions, the cultivated temperament, the use of the weapons and the objectives to be achieved. The whole scheme was unfolded by Guru Nanak and succeeding Gurus and the Sikhs continued their struggle to implement that scheme. This is a continuous process, moving forward and ending at no point.

Guru Nanak was a thoroughly spiritual man, mystic of the highest order. He believed more in experience, in action than in philosophical speculations. Still from the reading of his Bani, we come across some references which help us in reaching out to his philosophical formulations and practical steps which he took. Philosophically, Sikhism believes, as stated above, in one and formless God². According to it there is none else who is equal to Him, He is the master of all attributes. Therefore, He is the sole Creator of this universe. Everything is created by him. He creates from within Himself³ and keeps it within Himself. He is the ultimate determinant in terms of all forms of His creation.

Because Sikhism believes in one and formless God, it does not believe in idol-worship". According to it idol-worship promotes the attachment with the other one that is something other than God. Secondly, he is of the opinion that God cannot limit Himself in the form of an idol, a stone etc. He is an omnipresent power and it is possible only if He is formless. A form needs space and time and God is above such limitations. Therefore, the idea of God being in Nirgun form or in Sargun form is also not applicable to the philosophy of God in Sikhism. He is beyond everything and in everything at the same time.

Sikhism fundamentally does not believe in the theory of Avtar, that is, God descends Himself on earth to protect the suffering humanity. On the other hand it believes that there are men, who are spiritual of the highest degree, are the blessed souls and, therefore, are assigned the duty to liberate the humanity from its continuous suffering. Instead of crying and weeping for help from some external agency, it believes in creating a man of higher

character who just could not help but to stand for self-respect and human dignity. Such people are the men of the highest degree of the ethical and moral standards. Sikhism also does not believe in the theory of sending special beings as messengers to the people on the earth.

Sikhism perceives God as an ultimate determinant. He is the Master of absolute power, absolute beauty and love. These two attributes of God are the most cherishable attributes in Sikhism. By the time of the tenth Master, that is Guru Gobind Singh ji, this perception of God was strengthened up to the highest degree. Tenth Master expressed it in the words that love⁵ is the only way to emancipation and God is the only power on the earth. It is in this context that he has described Khanda (a double-edged sword, the symbol of absolute power) as the inheritor of the power of God. Thus love and Khanda became the symbol of the highest power and the most cherished instruments of change in the Sikh perception. The weapon of love i.e. moral force was introduced by Guru Nanak and Khanda was added by Guru Har Gobind Sahib for the desired structural change. Khanda, in Sikhism, is the product of the weapon of love. Therefore, it symbolises the feelings of love and strength both.

Thus God in Sikhism is absolute, formless and the ultimate determinant regarding all aspects of human life.

Sikhism believes that this universe has no relevance outside the domain of God. Only He is the Creator. He Himself is enjoying the process and the play of His creation⁶. Because it is the creation of Real, it is real in form and substance both. It is not something false or illusionary. Second, His creation is not without any logic. Of course, it is according to His own logic⁷. Sikhism believes that neither the logic nor the time and date of His creation can be fully understood, determined or related by anyone. If any person or some sacred book claims to have known any of these aspects of creation, according to Sikhism, they are in illusion. God, the creator, the absolute Master alone knows when, where and how He created.

This creation is not the first and the last act of creation. In fact, nobody other than God Himself knows the beginning and the end of this universe. According to Sikhism, substantially tin's is also

an eternal being like its Creator. This applies to every individual also.

This universe consists of a number of solar systems, each one of which, like its Creator, is unlimited and incomprehensible. Not only in substance, in form also, its incomprehensibility is the prevailing truth. Everything in the universe is unlimited and, therefore, wonderful. This concept of creation and its unlimitedness in every respect explains the context in which the world Vismad⁸ (wonderful) is used by Guru Nanak in Asa Di Var.

In the unlimited number of solar systems, there is one again unlimited solar system in which this earth is placed. Thus, earth according to Sikhism is a place where an individual merits his religiosity. Therefore, it is like a laboratory in which we are to work. On this earth also there is unlimited number of inanimate and animate forms. For example :

Night, season, date and day.

Air, water, fire (elements) and nether regions.

In the mutual gravitation of these.

He has established earth, as a place for meriting religion.

On this earth there is variety of life, colour and kind.

Endless is the variety in their names.

Everyone is judged by one's actions.

He is true and His court is true.

In His court, the accepted five sit in their grandeur.

They (five) are blessed with His insignia.

True and false are judged by them.

Saith Nanak : Those who repeat (His name) are discerned.

Japuji Sahib Pauri-34.

Sikhism believes that since everything is created by Him, the concept of evil is unfounded. Substantially and fundamentally each individual is divine in form and content. If he is given to act as an evil-doer, it is temporary. Sikhism believes that every individual is given a role to play in the way He likes.

Sikhism believes that an individual is born as a human being (Manas). The moment he opens his eyes, he starts to establish a contact with the outer world. Slowly he is driven to one of the two circles. One circle consists of the condemned and the second one

of the blessed, evergrowing⁹. The persons driven to the first circle are also indispensable part of the universal order. They are neither to be blamed nor to be thrown out. They deserve our sympathy since they are already condemned and leading a life which even they don't like to live. The second one is a circle of the blessed. By adding hard labour to the blessings, they always grow, progress and live an ever satisfied life. Sikhism's definition of culturalisation lies in the transformation of a human being into the circle of blessed ones. And at the same time the measures have to be taken to forbid the human beings from falling prey to the bad company leading to the circle of the condemned ones.

This process of upward journey of human beings which Sikh Gurus defined as the transformation of the being into divine, is completed by the help of the word (*Shabd*). *Shabd*, in fact, is the link between God, formless and His people. Of course, this link is served through a medium which God Himself picks up from a large number of His people.

This word of God, communicated through a medium, according to Sikhism, is synonymous with God. It is as powerful, competent to operate as God Himself. Sikhism believes that meditation upon this word is the real meditation, because it brings the meditator on the desired wave-length. Therefore, it forbids any other method of worship, special postures or rituals in which, even remotely, there can be a chance of hypocrisy.

The meditation upon this word really transforms an individual into divine, the highest degree of culturalisation. The culturalisation of a man in scientific terminology, according to Guru Nanak, is a journey from animal to divine. He is of the opinion that lust cannot quench lust. The greed for more further aggravates the greed and thus the creation of more wealth, more comforts and more structural changes do not necessarily give a culture to the humanity. The culturalisation takes place only if the animal man transforms himself into a spiritual man. This according to Guru Nanak is possible only through meditation upon the word. For example he says :

Bear, O ! my soul,
The results of your deed.

By not eating the food,
 One loses interest (in life).
 By living with the other (than God),
 One suffers sorrows.
 By not wearing clothes,
 One suffers day and night.
 When absorbed in silence.
 How thus sleeping one can be awakened without a Guru?
 One may walk bare-foot,
 He has to reap what he sows.
 By eating filth and filling head with dirt,
 The foolish blind have lost their dignity.
 Without the name (of God/Guru), they find no refuge.
 By living in jungles, in grave-yards,
 The blind do not realise and repent.
 They who meet the Guru will enjoy the happiness,
 They keep God's name dwelling in their mind.
 Saith Nanak Thus only the blessed (by God) can get.
 (It is) by distancing from desire and fear,
 By burning the ego with the word of (God)

Asa Ml.S.G.G.S. pp.463-64

In this way Guru Nanak through this image has communicated his concept of word, the relationship between the word and God and the power of the word.

The issue of culturalisation of society has been taken up by a number of philosophers and wise men throughout history and to some extent, they have succeeded in their mission also. The scientific ideologies, particularly, communism has also taken up this issue and it has traced the history of mankind from primitive man to the present civilized man. The invention of a number of instruments, like philosopher's ideas and artist's creations, have contributed to the progressive growth of humanity from a man who collects to a man who produces, creates and also hoards. Thus the world by now is far richer in wealth than the world of a few centuries back. The advance in science and technology, in industry and trade and in communication channels has helped in producing wealth and resultant comforts for the mankind. This is another

thing that more the wealth, the poorer the man from within, more the channels of communication and still more the closing of individual's mind. More the civilization of man and still more the large scale prevalence of hatred, violence, rape and mutual tensions. The more civilized modern man is more greedy, brute and violent. The restoration of the heart to heart communication is the need of the day.

Sikhism also has taken up this issue of the culturalisation of man. According to it, it is not a one time event or a self-generated continuous process of progression. It has to be created and continued by hard labour and under a strict discipline of the word, as stated above.

Guru Nanak, in order to create a channel for the transformation of an animal being into a divine being, that is, for bringing out real culturalisation of the society, has further laid down the following five principles. These five principles are in fact those which we, members of a modern society, now perceive as human rights. The concept of human rights is, no doubt, a recent one. But, Guru Nanak has given the founding principles of human rights in the 15th Century. He says:

1. One who eats his earning by hard labour and distributes the surplus among the needy.

Saith Nanak : Only he is the one who understands the real way to emancipation.

Salok, M1, S.G.G.S. P.1245

2. Saith Nanak : Snatching other's possession is like eating flesh of pig for one (Muslim) and flesh of cow for another (Hindu).

M.1, S.G.G.S., P.141

3. One should neither frighten someone nor accept the fear of anyone.

Salok, M.9, S.G.G.S., P. 1427

4. Neither there is a foe, nor a foreigner We are friendly with everyone,

Kanara M.5, S.G.G.S., P.1299

- 5 If we have to live at the cost of our dignity, everything that we eat becomes ill-gotten (Haraam).

Salok M.I, S.G.G.S., P.142

In this way Guru Nanak is of the opinion that it is only the hard labour which purifies the mind and beautifies the body. Thus the sanctified person signifies the highest degree of culturalisation. Such a body is the best medium of communication. It invariably strengthens the mutual bonds by providing a self-generating link between the different sections of society. Therefore, Guru Nanak, in his *bani*, again and again, asserts that real emancipation, both in the empirical and spiritual sense, is possible only through work and of course, through distributing the surplus among the needy. The third principle we had is the remembrance of *Naam* (Name) of God that is meditation upon the Shabd (word). Thus it is fundamental to every Sikh, or a member of living society :

1. To earn by hard work and honest means.
2. To remember the Naam (name) of God.
3. To share, whatever is earned, with the needy.

In this way, Guru Nanak keeps in his view the totality of life and universality of the fundamental principles in order to bring out a really workable social order. Through this principle, he repudiates the life style of a recluse or a hermit and strongly advocates the life-style which is awakened to respond to the sense of urgency of social responsibility. An individual in Sikhism is important only if he submits his total self to the well-being of every member of the society.

The second principle enjoins that everyone should enjoy what he had earned by his hard-labour and through honest means. It is a crime to crave for someone else's possession. This evil of snatching other's rights is a religiously condemnable act for every member of every section. The third principle of elimination of fear from individual's mind is very important principle. Unfortunately, we all continuously live under fear of something or the other. So much so that we fear even in dreams. This constant fear has enslaved our being. The so-called political or economic freedom becomes meaningless unless we are free from the fear. Unfortunately this vital concern remains unfulfilled in every form of

Government Guru Nanak perceives a society which must eliminate fear from an individual's mind and on the whole from society in order to bring out a really liberated self and coherent order in society.

In the next principle Sikhism emphasises the principle of mutual respect leading to mutual bond. Everyone is mutually linked by the very fact of one's being. The denial of this link actually creates social tensions. Nature has bound everyone with each other. The instinct of enmity is in fact a foreign element invited by us to create a number of barriers between one and another. Sikhism does not stand for it. The last principle pleads for the right to honourable and dignified living for everyone. Guru Nanak is of the opinion that we eat to live and in the absence of dignity the very food which we eat becomes illgo then illgotten. This fundamental principle is not limited to the one or the other section of the society. Whether one is rich or poor, whether one is weak or strong, whether one belongs to one religion, one sex or to another, the dignified and honourable living is the fundamental right of everyone. A slightest change in this status, brought in by force, disturbs the whole social order and in the vital perspective the whole cosmic order. Therefore, according to Sikhism, the best and fundamental principle of a just social order is to live and to let live in the way one likes and with the full honour and dignity. It absolutely forbids any interference in other's affairs. This is one right which must be guaranteed to every citizen.

Guru Nanak has taken up the issue of diversity also. He has detailed upon two types of diversities in the world. One type of diversity is given by God and the other one is given by man himself. The diversity given by God is so much and so vast that it is difficult to comprehend or to calculate it in the human way. This is both in macro and in micro order. Every part, even the smallest one of the nature is different from the other. This variety in forms, in colours, in names, in understanding, in habits and in expressions is so vibrant, so fascinating that it thrills the human mind with joy and bliss in abundance. Guru Nanak says :

Endless is the number of praises,

Endless is the number of people, who praise.

Endless is the number of doers, Endless is the
 number of givers, Endless is the number of
 seers, Endless is the number of listeners.
 Incomprehensible is the number of things,
 Which are happening in mind.
 Incomprehensible is the extent of His creation.
 incomprehensible is the limit of the Creator.
 Many are restless to know His bounds.
 They could not comprehend His limits.
 None knows this end.
 The more you say, the more will it be.
 Master is supreme, high is His abode.
 Still higher is His Name.
 If one is exalted as much as He is,
 Only he can know that Supreme.
 Only He knows how Supreme He is.
 Saith Nanak : All blessings are due to His grace.

S.G.G.S. Pauri-24, p.5

According to Guru Nanak each part of it is a source of wonder.
 The wonder which keeps one pure, alive, energetic and attuned to
 the cosmic order consistently. He says :

Wondrous are sound (words),
 Wondrous are Vedas,
 Wondrous are beings,
 Wondrous are varieties.
 Wondrous are forms,
 Wondrous are colours.
 Wondrous are naked wanderers,
 Wondrous is air,
 Wondrous is water.
 Wondrous is fire which plays wondrously.
 Wondrous is earth, wondrous are sources (of life).
 Wondrous are tastes which people are addicted to.
 Wondrous is the union,
 Wondrous is disunion,
 Wondrous is hunger,

Wondrous is consumption,
 Wondrous are attributes,
 Wondrous are praises
 Wondrous are in wilderness
 Wondrous are on the right path
 Wondrous are near
 Wondrous are far.
 Wondrous are those who are seen ever in Court (God's).
 I am looking at this wonderful play,
 And am struck with this wonder.
 Saith Nanak : Only fully blessed can understand this.

Asa, M.I, S.G.G.S. P.463-64

The second type of diversity is created by man himself. A man, for his vested interests, including political, economic and cultural, has tried to divide society into sections. In this way, the society has been divided into races, religions, castes, colours and sexes etc. It has further been divided by the demarcation of boundaries on political lines. In this way, the humanity is divided into fragments and different types of boundaries have been created to perpetuate this division eternally. In the process, an individual is not recognised by his being but by his birth, social, economic or political status. This process has turned a large section of society into a deprived society resulting in a number of social, economic and political problems which are suffered even by those who create these boundaries. The creator of such boundaries had conveniently forgotten that this principle of division is against the laws of nature, and also that they cry of an individual has the capacity to disturb the whole cosmic order¹⁰.

Sikhism does not approve of such tendencies. It believes in oneness of God and also oneness of man (including woman). It is of the opinion that each created being is same internally as well as externally, the same Atma operates through each mind and body. There may be, scientifically speaking, some variations in the internal physical structure of an individual but the external formation, for that matter the senses through which an individual has a contact with the external reality, are made in the same way and of the same material i.e. of the same five elements.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji says :
 Someone has become Sanyasi,
 And another one is Yogi,
 Someone is celibate.
 Someone wants to be known as pure.
 Someone is Hindu,
 Another one is believer in Islam,
 But the Human kind is same,
 And it must be recognised so.
 The kind creator is same,
 The merciful giver is same,
 There is no difference,
 None should be illusioned otherwise.
 One is to be served.
 He is the only Guru of all.
 One is the form,
 All must be known as His light.

Temple and Mosque are same,
 The worship and Namaz (Muslim way of worship) is same,
 All human beings are one,
 The diversity is only an impression.

The same eyes, nose, the same body and the same habits,
 All are the combination of the same.
 Earth, air, fire, sound and water.
 Allah and unknowable are same,
 Purana and Qurana are same,
 There is only one form.
 All are made in the same way.

(Akal Ustat)

Therefore, Sikhism, in principle and in practice both, does not believe in the division of society into segments. As a result of this principle Sikhism stands firmly against caste system, against sex prejudices and against political, social and religious boundaries. I am of the firm opinion that India throughout history has suffered

a large number of maladies due to this factor of dividing society into different sections. The principle of caste system has deprived a large number of people of the sense of belonging to the land, to its heritage, to its culture and also to its wealth. If such a large number of people, including women and Shudras, are deprived of the rights of ownership, the sense of belonging and also the pride of contributing to the well-being of the society, a society cannot grow in its fullness. This is one reason that India stands a country of divided people. Unfortunately, we are still groping in the same legacy. Sikhism does not approve of it. Guru Nanak has, in his *bani* again and again discarded this principle of dividing society into different castes, different groups and categories in order to meet their own vested interests. Guru Nanak says :

The sense of Jati (caste) is useless,
The pride of (big) name is useless,
The protector (God) for everyone is same.

Salok m.l, S.G.G.S., p.83

The second group of the exploited is that of women. Unfortunately, she is exploited everywhere. Even today and even in the most developed countries and also even in the name of freedom allowed by democratic set-up, she is exploited to the maximum. Indian society also did not spare her from this inhuman treatment. Since ages, she continued to be treated as a piece of property or a shoe worn by man. She was not allowed even to enter the door of religion. Right upto middle ages this treatment continued. Even the contemporaries of Guru Nanak condemned women as a hindrance in the men's religious progress. Guru Nanak does not agree with it. He raises the fundamental question of bi-sexuality of the beings. In his *bani*, he says that there is woman in every man and there is man-in every women. This fact has to be recognised and, therefore, there is no ground for discriminative attitude against women. He says :

"Female is in male and male is in female,
know 0 ! God-knowing person"

Ram Kali m.l., p.879

As a result of this attitude of Guru Nanak, the women in the Sikh society enjoy equal status. She can be a priest, she can be a warrior. She can hold any position of responsibility: religious, political or social. So much so, Guru Sahib believes that it is woman who provides the correct counsel to the male family members and also provides a correct type of leadership to the society outside. Guru Arjan Dev says :

"In whole of the family she is most venerable. She guides her younger brother-in-law and elder brothers-in-law".

Asa., m5, p.371

Bhai Gurdas goes a step further, where he says :

"In terms of folk-wisdom, qualities and knowledge she is better half and way to salvation".

Var.5, Pauri-16.

Guru Nanak has further dwelled upon this issue also.

He is of the opinion that God given laws are perfect, impartial and universally applicable and conducive to the growth of each individual & hence each society. Man made laws, through which we are governed now, are never perfect, impartial and universal. Even if they are made and operated with best intentions, they are liable to fault. This happens not only in a particular type of government. Through the experience of centuries, we have arrived at a secular and democratic principle and institutions of governance but even these do not respond effectively to the aspirations of all in equal terms. A section of people is bound to suffer in every form of government. The advancement in knowledge, science and technology, and experience in this respect has proved almost counter-productive. They have provided more sophisticated instruments to the ruling class to pursue its vested interests. This led to the vast amount of destruction in every field, in fact this has engineered a process of self-destruction. The different types of Governments like monarchy, aristocracy, dictatorship of an individual or a party, democracy and ideologies like Nationalism, socialism, capitalism and secularism which we tried in the past and are trying even now, have failed to provide a perfect, fully objective & all-round protective system to the people. The primary concern

of every system of providing a living with full honour and dignity, with a developed and a free mind and clear vision has remained only an unfulfilled dream of mankind. Guru Nanak is of the opinion that this kind of life is impossible in any man-made system. Only the kingdom of God, the king of the kings, can provide a system through the indomitable laws of nature. By implication the state laws should be framed and regulated in accordance with the laws of God/Nature. If such a step can be taken in theory and in practice the life of each individual will be free from all kind of internal and external pressures, it will be integrated and balanced, on the whole, a satisfied one.

Thus in the above said frame-work, diversity is the beauty and excellence of the Creator. The aesthetics of being lies only in recognising it, in accepting and in adjusting with it. This means, according to Guru Nanak, the beauty and strength of a people, in a geographical unit, lies in its being a plural society, a society with confluence of different colours, dresses, expressions and on the whole cultures. Those in history, who tried to build the people of a land on mono-stream have miserably failed. This policy is against the laws of nature and hence onward growth of a society. Therefore, the slogan of unity in diversity, in this sense, is a motivated one. But if given a proper perspective, this slogan conforms to the laws of God/nature. In this sense, this unity is not confined to the people of one land. The whole man-kind is of one stock and, therefore, one from within and without. This concept has to transcend the political boundaries also. If the painful cry of an individual affects the whole universal order, then it is the concern of everyone on earth. This principle and assertion that responding to this cry is the duty and right of a particular Government is only a farce. Therefore the theory of its being internal matter, is absolutely wrong and unjustified. Everyone, as a matter of right, be allowed to participate in taking corrective measures for ameliorating this cry. A suffering soul when rescued, gives a soothing effect to the whole surroundings.

Philosophy by and large is, "Science of things divine and human and the causes in which they are contained"¹¹. Then it is, "A system of completely united knowledge"¹². Thus, mainly

Philosophy confines itself to the science, to the logic or to the love of ideas. No doubt, Philosophy or the idea is the basis of the domain of human action, though the fear of "Being rendered tentative by the process of change and growth",¹³ always exists. A close study of the works of Sikh Gurus, do reveal a kind of their perception about their conceptual frame-work. But they directed the contemporary psyche to be more practical than theoretical only.

In order to put these principles into practice, Sikh Gurus i.e. Sikhism created or organised a few institutions. Like :

Central Place

Guru Nanak in his *bani*, conceived a central place for the growing number of his followers. In his life time, he founded Kartarpur Sahib for this purpose. His successors shifted the headquarters from Kartarpur to Khadoor Sahib, to Goindwal Sahib and finally to Sri Amritsar. It seems as if-it was a process of search for the future promised city. Guru Nanak mentions this city of Amritsar in his *bani*.

Serve true Guru who is an unlimited ocean.

Be blessed with the wealth of the diamond,
of Naam of God and take bath in Amritsar,

This will wash your poisonous dirt

Be blessed with Guru, the pond of contentment.

Maru Sohle M.I, S.G.G.S., P. 1043

During the time of Guru Amar Dass, the 3rd Guru, finally the selection of a central place for the Sikhs was made. This is the place which Guru Nanak declares to be a place of pilgrimage, a pool of nectar for the bath of the innerself. This clearly shows Guru's vision about the future city.

This city was visualised by Guru Nanak and was completed by Guru Hargobind Sahib, the sixth Guru. There are a number of sacred points in this city three of which are very important.

Amritsar (pool of nectar, from which the city gets its name), Harmandir Sahib (house of God) and Akal Takhat (Throne of the Immortal). These three form one complex, cater to the spiritual and temporal needs of the Sikhs and are dearer to them even more

than their life. In consonance with the precepts of the religion of Guru Nanak this sacred complex is open to all. Anyone can come and participate even in its proceedings at any time. He/she can take the sacred bath (in the pool of nectar), listen to singing of Gurbani (Kirtan), take parshad, sit in the same row with others for eating, donate for free and common kitchen and participate in the congregation. From architectural point of view, there are four doors of Harmandir Sahib, signifying that it is open to everyone. This place is the last and only refuge of a Sikh, "I have seen all other places, none is comparable with you", is the opinion of 5th Guru about Sri Amritsar. Every type of problem - religious, social or political - can be discussed and resolved here, in the presence of Guru/God. Guru is the protector of a Sikh here and hereafter. Therefore, it is in His nature to forgive the past misdeeds, to embrace with love and to put one, in future, on the right path. Sikh enters this complex with this type of confidence and conviction.

Guru Granth Sahib (Religious Text)

The truth contained in word (*bani*) belongs to God and it is for His people (*Sangat*). Guru Nanak is only a vehicle of communication. His successors (According to Sikh scriptures and belief all the Ten-Gurus were one in spirit and deed) upto the 5th Guru and then the 9th Guru, also wrote *bani* on the lines similar to those of Guru Nanak. His succeeding Gurus claim that their word is in fact the word of Guru Nanak. This treasure of his forefathers came down to Guru Arjun Dev Ji, the 5th Guru of the Sikhs. He collected the writings of Sufis, Bhaktas and Saints of his time and compiled them, alongwith the *bani* of Gurus. Later on 10th Guru added the *bani* of 9th Guru in Guru Granth Sahib and still later on he declared it to be, after him, the Guru of the Khalsa, in the body of Guru Granth Sahib.

Thus Guru Granth Sahib contains the *bani* of thirty-six *banikars*. Six of them are Sikh Gurus and remaining thirty are the Saints from different regions, castes, classes, religions and professions. Thus, persons from different social and religious status, different physical backgrounds, different beliefs, different linguistic

groups and very different way of life were to be together in Guru Granth Sahib. It was compiled to give a sacred scripture to the mankind through the Sikhs and also to illuminate their faith :

- (a) That their belief in oneness of God and oneness of mankind is not only a hearsay.
- (b) That the future society has to be plural society with an urge to develop a type of relationship on the basis of which people of divergent views, faiths, life styles will have to live together. It is not only a question of adjustment or accommodation but it is in the interest of every individual to accept this way of life, without any grudge or provocation from either side.
- (c) That barriers dividing mankind are false and not meaningful for the future growth of a progressive society.
- (d) That the revealed truth is the common heritage of the whole mankind. It does not divide but unites.
- (e) That the variety in language and culture is natural and, therefore respectable.
- (f) That the word (spirit) is the real guide. Even while continuing to be a Muslim, Christian or a Hindu, one can be part of the divine wisdom, contained in Guru Granth Sahib.

Every word of Guru Granth Sahib conveys this kind of meaning. These words formed the grounds upon which, later on, various institutions of Sikhism were established.

Instead of choosing and nominating his successor, extending the line of succession further, as his predecessors did, Guru Gobind Singh chose to declare Guru Granth Sahib as his successor and with this closed the tradition of having Guru in mortal frame. Thus Guru Gobind Singh decided to give to the Sikhs the word as Guru who embodies the wisdom and spirit of both the empirical and spiritual reality.

This decision of Guru Gobind Singh, to declare 'Word' as Guru, was in fact a decision which was taken by Guru Nanak himself This decision was accepted and practised by succeeding s also. For example :

Word is deep and serious Gur, Pir (Muslim preacher)
The world is bewildered without this.

Sorath, m.l (Ashatpadi), S.G.G.S., P.635

Word is Guru, disciple's attachment with Guru is through its sound.

Sidh Gosht, m.l, S.G.G.S.,

P.943 How an atheist can have an attachment with word,
Without this attachment with word He has to take birth and die.

Maru, m.l, S.G.G.S., P.1042

Bani (word) is Guru, Guru is word,
Word is full of all nectars.
If word says and disciple believes,
Guru will emancipate invariably.

Nat m.4 (Ashtapadi), S.G.G.S. P.988

In *Gurbani* God, Gum, word are synonymous. Guru Nanak repeatedly tells in his *bani* that his Guru is God, his Guru is word. Therefore, in the declaration of Guru Gobind Singh that Guru Granth Sahib is the future Guru of Khalsa, in fact, Guru Nanak's concept of a Guru is transforming itself into an institution. When Guru Arjun Dev compiled the body of Guru Granth Sahib he clearly anticipated its future status and started treating it as Guru i.e. Guru of the Sikhs during his life time. He himself used to sit in its presence after placing it on a higher platform. In fact, this is the basis of the belief of the Sikhs, as enshrined in Sikh scriptures that all the ten Gurus were one in spirit and one in deed. Only Guru Nanak operated through the succeeding nine forms. The declaration of the Tenth Master was only an event in this historical sequence.

The allegation that religion divides, thus is not applicable to, at least, the Sikh religion. On the other hand, it eliminated the grounds on which the people were divided. It evolved a functional structure which unites the already divided. The whole mankind is given a common principle to adopt and a common ground to stand upon.

Sangat (Congregation)

In order to bring the concept of service into practice, Guru Sahib, first of all, created the institution of Daswandh. Alongwith it he created the institution of *Sangat*, *Pangat* and *Langar* etc. It is *Sangat* (congregation) in which persons from any religion, faith, caste, colour or sex can participate. Every participant has equal right and equal responsibilities. No discrimination on grounds of birth is allowed. The only thing- which is expected of a Sikh is to serve without a greed for any reward. Every member of the congregation treats an opportunity for service as a divine gift. Thus, every member of the congregation is activated upto the extent that he takes pride in going a step ahead of his fellow members in this direction. Congregation and God are believed to be one and an act done in the service of one is considered to be automatically dedicated to the service of other.

Pangat (Row)

In *Pangat* everyone, without considering one to be low or high, sits on the ground in one row to dine together. In it everyone is equal in status. Discrimination of any kind is forbidden. Not only in eating, but in the matter of serving also, everyone has equal rights. Gurus themselves used to sit in *Pangat* and also serve with their own hands. This is wrong that *Langar* (common and free kitchen) is there only to serve the poor. Poor can be served in a number of ways. This institution, alongwith serving the poor, seeks to bring high and low on the equal footing, to purgate an individual's ego. According to the spirit of this institution, king and beggar sit together at the same level in the same row (*Pangat*) and ⁶³¹ the same food. Thus, through this institution, Sikh Gurus Manifested their conviction of treating everyone equal in the domain of Sikhism. Everyone, even a person hitherto considered low in birth, could join in cooking, eating, serving and donating equally. Sikh Gurus made it an indispensable institution of the Sikh religion. from the days of Guru Nanak, every Gurudwara for this

matter every house, is under an obligation to serve the hungry and needy. This institution (including that of Langar), in fact, was created to put Guru Nanak's principle of equality, in all respects, into practice.

Amrit (immortal)

It is one of the prominent institution of Sikhism. At the conceptual level, it belongs to human yearning for immortality. This is one desire which disciplines the human behaviour.

Sikh Gurus transformed this general concept into an institution. Guru Nanak, in the 38th Pauri of Japu Ji Sahib, illustrates this aspect of Sikhism through the image of a smithy or a mint. In this smithy or mint the traditional tools are given new meaning and the object to be forged is a new way of life. For this purpose, Guru Sahib says that discipline be the smithy, *Amrit* be the metal, patience, wisdom, knowledge, fear of God, austerity and attachment with God be the tools. Obviously, *Amrit* is the major contributory in forging such a personality.

This institution was carried forward by succeeding Gurus also, For example :

"Those who are blessed with your name

They are in bliss from within

Saith Nanak ; Amrit is one, there is no second kind of Amrit"

Var Sarang, m.2, S.G.G.S. P. 1239

"Let us live in union with our Guru, drink *Amrit*, This will relieve us from duality by killing it.

Gauri Purbi Chhant m.3, S.G.G.S., P.244

Guru Gobind Singh concretised this tradition by preparing Amrit and baptising his sikhs with it. This metal, given by Guru Nanak, was used to remodel the Sikhs. Guru Nanak changed the innerself of Sikhs and Guru Gobind Singh changed their outer being also. Thus, a baptised Sikh symbolises the culturalisation of nature, the Sikh code of conduct and the truth in practice.

Sachiar

In Japu Ji Sahib, Guru Nanak has detailed his religious ethical concepts through an individual whom he has termed as sachiar (one who lives a truthful living). He has used this word at three places. In the first place, he used it in the form of a question mark. *Sachiar* is his ideal man, who embodies spiritual as well as physical powers in him. This is one word through which Guru Nanak is explaining his grand design of the total universal set up and an individual's place and role in it. He says :

Worrying brings no result even if one worries a lac times
(Idiomatic use of word soch).

Silence does not silence even if one observes it continuously.

Lust does not quench lust even if one gathers in abundance.

Wisdom of thousands and lacs kinds is of no avail.

How then to become a sachiar? (one who lives a truthful living)

How to break the wall of falsehood?

By realising the Order.,

By living by the will

Nanak writes alongwith.

It is clear that in Guru Nanak the ideal of sachiar takes precedence over every other ideal, even that of attaining salvation. Sachiar is really an emancipated person in this world and the world to come.

At another place, Guru Nanak has illustrated his answer to the above question. He says :

True is Master, true is His name,

Endless are the expressions of love,

Beggars beg for more and more

Giver gives endlessly,

Then, what to present before Him (God),

In order to have an access to His Court.

Which words should one speak that will attract his love for him.

Get up early in the morning.

Reflect upon the greatness of His true Name.

Body is due to one's actions,

But liberation is due to His grace.
 Saith Nanak : By believing (and acting) like this,
 Everyone will naturally be a Sachiar
 (one who lives truthful living).

(Pauri : 4)

This use of the word Sachiar clarifies the daily code of an ideal man of Guru Nanak. In the third place again Guru Nanak uses this word in a conditional sense. He says, "If someone realises it, he becomes a *Sachiar*",

(Pauri : 16)

While going through all the above quoted three references, it can be concluded that in Guru Nanak bani, especially, Japuji Sahib, sachiar is the highest position which an individual may strive to achieve. At another place, he says that truthful living is higher than even truth itself. The use of this word signifies that Guru Nanak does not split the reality into units. His emphasis is upon transmitting secular into spiritual and thus bringing the spirituality into human actions. Sachiar is a living being, he is a social entity, he has a social role and is a symbol of the desired change in the future social reality. He is invested with divine qualities at the same time.

This is the concept which flowered itself into the concept of Saint-Soldier (Sant-Sipahi) at the time of Guru Gobind Singh. His ideal man is one who is in constant struggle against the internal and external oppression and at the same time is in tune with the Supreme Reality. This ideal man is the saint-soldier, having the qualities of a Saint and soldier at the same time. An individual of Guru Gobind Singh's conception combines physical power and moral discipline in him. Such a man, irrespective of his affinity with any section of society, is an ideal man. This concept of Saint-Soldier was clearly founded by Guru Nanak, in his *Japuji Sahib*, in the concept of a *Sachiar*.

According to Guru Nanak, Sachiar is an answer to the problems of the future society. It is absolutely a new concept specifying the new objectives, new weapons and new results. This is one concept which became an instrument of change for the revolution which Sikhs brought about in the history.

Pyaras (Five beloved ones)

At the centre of *Sangat* and an individual or the ruler, there is an institution of Five-beloved ones (Panj Pyaras). These five are selected from amongst the *Sangat*. Their position is also not permanent, they represent the *Sangat*, and also they guide the managers. They are, in *fact*, the real executive power in Sikh Panth. Their power is not limited to the political matters only. They have the authority to guide and keep a constant vigilance on the functioning of every institution *i.e.* religious, political, and social etc. Thus, they will guide the ruler as well as the *Sangat* in every matter. Of course, they are selected by the *Sangat*, but once they are selected and are in office, their advice will be applicable to all. Every individual as a member of the *Sangat* can aspire to be one of the Five-beloved ones or one of the rulers.

This institution of Five-beloved ones (Panj Pyaras) was conceived by Guru Nanak as is evident from the above quoted Pauri of *Japuji Sahib*. It continued to guide the destiny of the Sikhs, even during Time of the succeeding Gurus. Guru Nanak says :

"In *Gurmat* (Sikhism) Five beloved ones are the sons of Guru".

Maru M.I, S.G.G.S., P.I081.

Their position was exalted to the extent that Tenth Master, after baptising them with Amrit (Nectar), bowed before them and requested them to baptise him in return, in the way he had baptised them. This act of Guru Gobind Singh explains that how much important the institution of five is, how much reverence the collective will of Khalsa is given and how the position of Guru and Sikh exchanges itself at times. Thus, this institution of Panj Pyaras is part of the basic structure of Sikhism since the day of its inception.

Service

Service is one type of human behaviour which is accepted and preached as higher value of life . It has been emphasised by almost all the Preachers of Truth of all times. It has been written in the

sacred books that service is the best act, an individual can ever think about or can act upon. And also, almost all the leaders of humanity, irrespective of their faith, have adopted it as a way of life. In present times it has become a slogan also. But, there is no doubt, that great men served and are serving the humanity, Objectively speaking, an act of service is a glory of human appearance.

Guru Nanak also wrote about this glory, about the desirability and essentiality of an act of service. In his bani he describes three ways of doing service. The service which is done (1) through body, (2) by involving mind and (3) through financial aid.

Guru orders everyone to share one's earning with the needy. This postulate of the Sikh religion later on, developed into an institution named *Dashwandh* :

One who works with his own hands, thus earns and brings it home as his income. If such a Sikh submits one-tenth of this before his Guru, only he earns praise in the world*.

This means to contribute, one-tenth of one's earnings to the collective pool voluntarily. This collection has to be used for individual as well as collective well-being. Guru orders his Sikhs that it is their duty to contribute their share in the form of service done through above said three means, simultaneously. It means if situation demands a Sikh has to be always ready to submit his total being to the cause of the suffering humanity. He should be prepared to lay down even his life in the service of the needy.

In Sikhism, service is not only an act of giving something in alms. It is much more. It has become an institution in itself. There are references in *Gurbani* which speak that only one who dedicates himself to the act of service is worth of being a sikh. His worth of being a Sikh, as religious person, is a worth of being a human being. Guru Sahib is of the opinion that the way to liberation is only through an act of service. He says, "if we serve in the world, only then we find a place in His court". (Sri Rag.m.l). No meditation can match an act of service.

Perfect Guru has given thought to the meditation of *Jangam, Jodh, Jati, Sanyasi* (all meditators).

They will never get any fruit unless they do service, because only service is the real meditation.

Maru m.I, S.G.G.S., P.993

All other methods are insufficient unless they are coupled with an act of service. In fact, in Sikh Religion only service signifies the religiosity of a person, It :

- (a) Pledges to keep the mankind bound into a mutually trustworthy relationship.
- (b) Attempts to develop a creative attitude towards life.
- (c) Attempts to transform the religion into social institution.
- (d) Underlines the fact that Sikhism, in fact, is a commune-religion. It is a collective attempt to approach the reality.

In this way, the founder of a recently born religion, formulated his ideas, perceived certain institutions to put them into practice and generated a kind of force for the service of mankind. The Sikhs stood by his commitment given to the suffering humanity, in the following words, and in return themselves suffered innumerable persecutions in their short history of about 500 years. This commitment is ;

There are people who are oppressed among oppressed.

There are people who are still more oppressed.

Saith Nanak : I am one with them and have no relation with (so-called) big people.

Sri Rag M.I, S.G.G.S., P.15

References

¹- Dhanasari M.I, S.G.G S., P661.

²- S.G.G.S., P.I.

³ He (God) created Himself. And He Himself gave a name to Himself. Asa M.I, S.G.G.S., P.463. ⁴- They worship stones (idols) and pose like a heron. They tell a lie,

And prove that iron is gold.

If they know the secret of divine deed, Then they must also know the futility of rituals. Asa, M.I. S.G.G.S., P.470.

i am speaking the truth. Let everyone listen to it. Only they achieve

the oneness with God.

Who love Him intenesly. Dasam Granth (*Chopai*) P.14 (1952 Bikrami).

6. Then He (God) created His nature. And by seating in it, He enjoys His creation. Asa M.I, S.G.G.S., P.463.
7. You (God) have created the universe in your own logic., Asa M.I, S.G.G.S., P.473-474.
8. Salok, Asa M.I. S.G.G.S., P.463-464.
9. S.G.G.S., P.7.
10. If, I weep, the whole world weeps, even the trees and birds weep. Vadhans M.I, S.G.G.S., P.558.
11. The American Educator Encyclopaedia : T.N. Edition 1940, CHICAGO.
12. *Ibid*
13. The Columbia Encyclopaedia - 2nd Edition, New York.

SIX

The convergence of *Meeri* and *Peeri* took place at the hands of Sri Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru of the Sikhs at the time of succession to the throne of Guruship. He abandoned the traditional procedure of ceremony and instead wore two swords, one hanging on his left shoulder and the other one on his right shoulder. Of the two swords, one signified the *peeri* (spiritual) and the other one signified *meeri* (temporal). Thus, temporal and spiritual got converged into one whole signifying a new perspective of life. On the whole, this was something new, so far unknown to the Indian people and, therefore, it sent shock waves to many of them also. For many of them, it was absolutely an inexperienced way of life.

In the earlier traditions, the perception of life was quite different. The interest in temporal well-being means extra-interest in pleasures of worldly life. This also meant for them the negation of spiritual life or atleast the perpetual indifference towards it. This attitude, they would treat as source of all maladies and calamities resulting into pain, agony and suffering. The ideal of human life would mean an extreme self-discipline, complete restraint and negation of interest in the pleasures of temporal life. As a result of this attitude, they would eulogise the life of a hermit or recluse who had abandoned interest in this worldliness and has developed interest in the other worldliness, in a place in paradise or in the life after death, in the process, most of the Indians turned their back towards their responsibility particularly towards their family and society. It is recorded that such people retired to the forests and caves in order to achieve the salvation for their person. They stopped bothering about what happens to their families and

countrymen who were left behind in homes. This created a society of hypocrites, weak in moral fibre, demoralised, docile and helpless people. This wilful submission to the will of the invaders, rulers, social tyrants, the contentless religious rituals and taboos was all alone their destiny. Guru Nanak has recorded in his *bam* that a kind of religious perversion took over them and they, in this way, neglected their temporal consideration. A kind of hollowness around such persons and institutions was created and instead of bringing them back to the right path, they were being idealised by the society.

The other section of the society was totally indulging in the worldly pleasures. So much so that they did not believe in God and hence in any kind of morality. They were indifferent to the idea of immortality, paradise or life after death. Their concern was in present life only. Traditionally, they were known as Carvakyas. This attitude resulted in creating a separate class of people. Thus, two sections came into being and they were completely antagonistic to each other. This gave an impression of the two different societies. Mutual bickerings, conflicts and hardening of the attitude was the normal behaviour of this time.

This, alongwith the scriptural sanctions of keeping the society unequal through its divisions into classes and further equating women with *Shudras*, the absolutely deprived section of society, resulted into an unnatural and unjust order during the period of Guru Nanak. This social order further confused and complicated the situation by justifying a gap between word and deed and by preference to end than to the means. Keeping in view, the total situation of the time, it becomes imperative to believe that though Indian civilization was undoubtedly old, may the oldest one, yet it was certainly not a fully grown civilisation. It was stilt an under-developed one. Imbalance was the only product of this system which further produced a mutilated society.

At this stage, Guru Nanak (1469-1539 A.D.), the founder of Sikh religion, appeared on the scene. He did not reconcile with this order. Through deep thought and prolonged meditation, he decided to remodel the mutilated human society, imbalanced human growth and dehumanised social rituals resulting into an under-developed

civilisation. For this purpose, first of all, he decided to forego his personal comforts and family interest. For about twenty years, he left the home and travelled throughout India and at some places abroad, in those days, risking even his personal security. He visited the central places of all the religions and their sects say of the Hindus, Bodhis, Jainis, Yogis, Muslims, Sufis and many other cults Vaishnavas, Shivas, Shakats, Tantriks etc. He had a direct dialogue with the heads of these places. In fact, Guru Nanak firmly believed that the key to resolve all conflicts and hence to have the balanced growth lies in building strong channels for mutual communication. This communication has to be established between man and Guru/God and between man and man, at the same time.

Thus, Guru Nanak is of the opinion that the process of mutual dialogue 'something to say and something to listen' must be kept alive. In present times, the irony of the situation is that we have far more facilities for communication, a large number of channels are available, yet unfortunately, the real communication is nearly closed. The face we put up, the words we speak and the actions we do, do not reveal what actually we are. I think this is a major reason that the society is approaching its doomsday at a fast speed. I think it must be their urgent and an earnest desire which led the promoters of the present Conference to initiate such a massive, impressive and meaningful event for the recovery of the diseased vast majority of people, marked by its closeness. Thus, the mission of this Conference has a close resemblance with the mission of Guru Nanak!

Many of the past and present philosophers and academicians have been exercised upon the nature of relationship between the innerself i.e. mind and outerself i.e. body of an individual as a specimen of representing the Universe. Some of them believe in their dual position i.e. mind and body are two different identities and they must be nourished separately with a separate kind of food. Some of them believe that mind and body are inter-dependent. They are of the opinion that the health of one affects the health of other. That is why a slogan, normally is given in our schools since the days of Aristotle that only a sound body can have a sound mind and vice-versa. This point of view finds acceptances in Sri Guru

Granth Sahib also. Baba Farid says, "Today I have not been in union with my Beloved, therefore, my limbs (of body) are being twisted".¹ The authors of Sri Guru Granth Sahib go a step further. They are of the opinion that mind and body are not only interdependent but they are actually one and an inseparable whole, a composite complex. If body is made of five elements, i.e. air, fire, water, sound and earth, so is mind of. Therefore, it is not that the health of one affects the health of the other, but either both are healthy or both are diseased at the same time. It is the whole, therefore, either the whole is well organised or the whole is ill-organised. The idea of a mighty villain being defeated by an appearingly weak hero in art, drama, film, originates from this perception of the whole. Brave body without a brave mind is only an ego-centricity or blindness like a stone. It has to be treated as a whole and the whole has to grow together and simultaneously. It applies to the each living being on earth whether it is a plant, insect, animal, bird or human-being. Similarly, life in a historical context is a whole, a composite complex. Its being cannot be segregated into social, political or religious one.

Earlier religious traditions, particularly Indian ones, are characterised by dualism. They believe that body i.e. matter is a hindrance on the way to the spiritual progress and, therefore, it must be neglected. Members of some religious sects, as recorded by Guru Nanak in 'Asa di Var' would not properly eat or dress or even keep their body clean. They would not eat, if they eat, they would eat only left-over food and wear only a loin cloth, walk barefoot, keep their body dirty and on the whole would give a very nauseating look. This was because they believed that the eternal reality was only the inner-self and that it must be kept safe in this world of temptations. This exercise was done in the name of discipline. Guru Nanak did not agree with this way of looking at reality. He firmly believed that inner-self cannot fully grow till the body is not properly nourished, kept clean and allowed not to be diseased. This was distorted meaning of discipline. Discipline had to originate from within. Disciplined body may not necessarily have a disciplined mind. On the other hand, a disciplined mind can truly discipline the body. Therefore, undoubtedly, discipline is a positive

quality and no individual, no family, no nation can be expected to grow or progress without cultivating this quality. Accepting the importance of discipline, Guru Nanak writes that the balanced growth of this universe is in fact a result of the discipline given by God to the totality of being. Every smallest particle, the functionary of this universe, is under a severe discipline. Guru Nanak says :

In (God's) fear (discipline) the air is ever blowing.
 In fear the lacs of rivers are flowing.
 In fear the fire is burning.
 In fear the earth is bearing burden.
 In fear the Ind(cloud) is moving head down.
 In fear kings' courts are judicious.
 In fear is sun, in fear is moon,
 Crores of miles they journey endlessly.
 In fear are perfect men, intellectuals, divines, Masters.
 In fear are hanging skies.
 In fear are the brave, the most powerful.
 In fear one is transmigrating by turn.
 Everyone's destiny is fear.
 Saith Nanak : only one, True, Formless is beyond fear.²

An individual or a nation must accept this reality and cultivate its growth accordingly. For this, the inner-self as well as the outer-self must be a healthier composition which is possible only through the balanced growth. For this, Guru Nanak suggests that the clothes must be cleaned with soap, the body with water and mind with the remembrance of the name of God.³ The whole unit has to be clean, disciplined and to be open to upward journey to move ahead.

Sikh Gurus firmly believed that each individual or for that matter each event in the Universe is a manifestation of the same Reality. The earlier view that the only mind, the soul, the self or Atma is a manifestation of God and body is only the assemblage and disassemblage of five elements which appear and disappear at the time of birth and death, is not acceptable to Sikhism. No doubt that five elements assemble and disassemble on both occasions but the power to do so is inherent in them, though given by God Himself. It is because of this power that the above process starts

at both the occasions. Each particle of the visible or invisible reality is only enliven through the presence of this vibrant force in it. The force behind assemblage of five elements into a body, the smallest or the biggest, is this Supreme Reality and then a body is made to be alive through the enkindling of this light in it. Therefore, body is not a Reality to be denigrated, ignored or treated as an undesirable for the path to salvation. On the other hand, Sikhism believes that if the "soul is something identical with God"⁴ then the "body is also temple of God"⁵ and it must be given its original status. If each individual or total Universe is under the law of change, this Supreme Reality, the vibrant force in it, is also moving ahead along with it.⁶ In this way, in the *bani* of the Sikh Gurus the power to create and the created individual are unified into one single entity, thus rejecting the compositional dualism between the matter and mind or soul and body. Physical reality, in the ultimate analysis is as non-dual as spiritual reality and, therefore, they just cannot be separated on any occasion or for any reason, in the given situation, this was a changed perception of reality and it highly revolutionised the whole perspective.

Elaborating this point of view, Guru Nanak deals with the life in Universe. He is of the opinion that God has created life with unlimited and uncountable variety in name, form and colour. Only in *Japuji Sahib* he turns towards this subject again and again. The frequency of such references seems to be his most cherished subject. For example, out of 38 stanzas of this *bani*, he deals with this subject in at least 12 stanzas, numbering 16,17-19, 22, 24, 25, 27, 33, 35, 37. But to make it very clear, Sikhism does not accept the man-made variety *i.e.* division of society into different castes and classes based upon birth, colour, race or sex, resulting into inequality and injustice.

Thus, physical phenomena according to Guru Nanak is the whole truth (because the Creator and the creation both are true), the most beautiful and full of thrill. The impact of the contact with this unlimited colour which the Creator has given to its creation is something to be felt and lived. It makes the life rejoiceable at every step and through every drop. It is a source of wonder, a wonder which, in fact, words are unable to express in its real

magnitude. Guru Nanak in his Asa Di Var says :

Wondrous are sounds (words),
 Wondrous are vedas.
 Wondrous are beings
 .Wondrous are varieties.
 Wondrous are forms,
 Wondrous are colours.
 Wondrous are naked wanderers.
 Wondrous is air,
 Wondrous is water.
 Wondrous is fire which plays wondrously.
 Wondrous is the earth, wondrous are sources (of life).
 Wondrous are tastes which people are addicted to.
 Wondrous is the union,
 Wondrous is disunion.
 Wondrous is hunger,
 Wondrous is consumption.
 Wondrous are attributes,
 Wondrous are praises.
 Wondrous are in wilderness,
 Wondrous are on the right path.
 Wondrous are near ones,
 Wondrous are far.
 Wondrous are those who are ever seen in Court (of God).
 I am looking at this wonderful play,
 And am struck with this wonder.
 Saith Nanak : Only fully blessed can understand this.⁷

Real solution lies not in rejecting it (worldiness) and retiring to the forests and caves for leading a regulated life or for attempting at personal salvation but it lies in participating in it, for making life more beautiful, worth living and dignified in appearance

Sikhism stands for a beautiful and a livable world and society.
 God has made it so.

But the man due to his ignorance leading to ego-centricity has made it miserable. The poor ignorant does not know that his blind pursuit for selfish motives and vested interests will ultimately destroy him. This lust for more is a self-destroying process. This

makes the things around miserable. This problem, once allowed to go on, becomes multi-dimensional. First it arises out of man's attempt to enslave nature, to make it subservient to his own interests and to regulate its energy in the way it suits him and, as he misconceives, to the fulfillment of his dream only. In the process, he destroys all the checks and balances which nature has, throughout the years, evolved for the protection and well-being of the total cosmic life, applicable to individual life also. This is one reason that the world in which we are living is practically burning. The process of dehumanisation is at its full swim. Rape, violence, booty, mass destruction is the order of the day. Those who are managing the modern states, in fact, are clearly responsible for this malady. The laws are being enacted in clear violation of the natural laws, hi the name of democracy, exploitation of the natural and collective resources is at the rampage, the fundamental rights are frequently and deliberately violated. The violence and looting is perpetuated through state agencies. Hypocrisy is universal and man is used only as a tool to keep the State machinery intact.

Guru Nanak believes in inter-related health of mind and body and also that total life in Universe is inter-dependent. Therefore, the ecstasy of the bliss or cry in pain of an individual, affects cosmic order of life, the total operating consciousness and behaviour of each individual. Guru Nanak says, "If I weep, the whole world weeps, even the trees and birds are weeping".⁸ This internal and natural connecting link is broken on one or the other pretext, and this has resulted in universal agony. The modern State does not allow an individual or another State to respond to the human cry in the name of interference in its sovereignty or its being internal matter of a particular State. A state i.e. a man-made establishment creates hue and cry and hampers the process of responding to the agony of an individual or a group from other corners of the world.

Second problem arises out of the similar situation and this one is equally disastrous. Unfortunately, again due to the vested interest, man creates various kinds of barriers between one and another. These barriers are based upon caste, colour, faith, area and sex etc. Every sensible person knows that these barriers are unfounded, they damage everyone and have no moral sanction. This

enslaves our being. Thus, we suffer from our birth to death. Guru Nanak does not reconcile with it as is evident from the following quotes :

The pride of caste is useless,
The pride of big name is useless,
Everybody is under the protection of the same (God).⁹

The problem of casteism, classification and prejudices against women, particularly in India, was widely prevalent. The seriousness of the problem can be judged from the fact that these were sanctioned by the religious scriptures of the Hindus. So much so that *Shudras*, fourth class in the hierarchy of Indian society, and women were equated and they were not allowed to enter even the doors of religion. They had no right to own any thing. *Shudras* were born to serve the higher classes and similarly women were born to serve the man. Thus, the Indian society was marked by inequality, injustice and demarcations. Guru Nanak did not agree with this man-made barriers. *Gurbani* laid down the principle, "There is one father (God) and we all are His children",¹⁰ justifying that we all are having the same blood running into our veins. Guru Gobind Singh (the tenth Guru) goes a step further where he illustrates this founding principle of Sikhism in more detail. He says :

Someone has become Sanyasi,
And another one is Yogi,
Someone is celibate,
Someone wants to be known as pure.
Someone is Hindu,
Another one is believer in Islam,
But the human kind is same,
And it must be recognised so.
The kind creator is same,
The merciful giver is same,
There is no difference,
None should be ilusioned otherwise.
One is to be served.
He is the only Guru of all.

One is the form,
All must be known as His light.

Temple and Mosque are same,
The worship and Namaz (Muslim **way of** worship) is same,
All human beings are one,
The diversity is only an illusion!

The same eyes, nose, the same body and the same habits,
All are the combination of the same,
Earth, air, fire, sound and water
Allah and unknowable are same,
Purana and Qurana are same,
There is only one form,
All are made in the same way.

(Akal Ustat)

Guru Nanak vehemently stood against the cruel system which is known as Brahminism of the caste-Hindus, in order to ensure a free, just and dignified living, he educated the people about the evils of the system. He tried to redirect the source from where, the above repressive system gets strength. Therefore, he attempted at building an alternate system.

Guru Nanak condemned the contemporary monarchy and the resulting political system. It was found unfit for protecting the legitimate interest of the people. Guru Nanak is very critical about those who were managing the affairs of the State. He says :

" Greed and sin, both are king and his minister,
Falsehood has become the succour,
Cupidity is assistant who sits on judgement."¹¹

Therefore, he demarcated an alternate system. For him even the king is not the real owner. The real owner is *Sacha Padshah* (God). In order to manage his kingdom properly, Guru Nanak conceived of a trio consisting of Guru/God, *Sangat* (Congregation) people, and an individual. This trio with the combined will and endeavor should manage the state. In this way, Guru Nanak conceived of a political system in which the real sovereign is God,

eternal, *Sangat* represents the real sovereign, therefore, *Sangat* is also sovereign. And an individual represents and constitute the *Sangat*, therefore, he is also a sovereign.

hi this way the worldly ruler is neither a sovereign nor the real owner. He owns his authority to God/*Sangat*/Individual.

Thus every functionary carries an authority with him delegated by an individual/people for a specific duty. Thus the ruler in Guru Nanak system rules on behalf of the people.

Commenting upon contemporary social morality, Guru Nanak's says, "Nanak : What type of world has become ?"

There is none left to be friend or guide.

The brotherly, friendly relationship (of love) is wanting.

They have sacrificed faith over wealth.¹²

hi his paradigm of alternative social morality, he believes that it makes no difference whether one is rich or poor, an educated or uneducated, an ignorant or knowledgeable, a master or a servant, a high caste or low caste and a ruler or in the ruled. A person should be known by his quality. In this way there are two types of persons that is *Gurmukh* (Guruward) and *Manmukh* (self-centered). Therefore, what matters in a person or in a community is the quality, humanness and not any other consideration. He or she must be recognised as a human and be dealt with accordingly and that is all.

Guru Nanak's religious perception also is two dimensional. He condemned the existing contentless ritualism, hypocrisy and commercialisation of religion and as an alternative he presented a model of a commune. It should be based on morality and should have collective will to manage and collective ends to achieve. Personal ends including the achievement of paradise is not the legitimate interest of Sikhism. Religion according to Guru Nanak should help in opening the mind of an individual.

Guru Nanak presented his own model of economy also. His is a service oriented economy. Service in Sikhism is not only an act of giving something in charity. It has to be done through body, through mind and through the money which we earn through honest means. There are references in *Gurbani* which determine the significance of a person only in terms of service. Even the way to

liberation is only through an act of service. Guru says, "if we serve in the world, only then we find a place in the court of people and God"¹³ service :

1. Keeps the mankind bound into mutually trustworth relationship.
2. attempts to develop a creative attitude towards life.
3. attempts to transform religion into social institution.
4. underlines the fact that Sikhism, in fact, is a commune religion. It is a collective effort to approach the reality.

On the whole, Guru Nanak wanted that state laws should be framed strictly in accordance with the laws of nature and thereby a human approach to solve every human problem should be pressed into practice. Similarly, religious codes should be framed for strengthening the moral base of an individual and society. For Guru Nanak, religion, in fact, means only morality and not meaningless rituals. The social behaviour of an individual should be service oriented and through this one should have a satisfied life in every situation.

No doubt, Guru Nanak was a thoroughly religious man, a founder of a new religious order but, as said above, his concern for the temporal life was equally strong. In fact, he grounded temporal life in his spiritual praxis thereby redefining religion, the morality, the political and social convictions. His concern for providing a balanced and harmonious life, at all levels, is explicitly pronounced through his writings. In his *bani*, he presents a logical approach even to the animal needs of an individual, in the matter of food and dress. He respects the individual's right to choose. He has only one condition and that is that one should not eat, drink (water) or dress which creates disorder in his mind and body. One should preferably lead a house-holder's life. A Sikh should not fall prey to the taboos of evil spirits, evil days, evil times and evil omens. He should not develop fear, of sin resulting into guilty consciousness, of loss, even in the face of death. Everyone must have a free and open mind with full assurance that God feeds and protects everyone in every situation. Whatever God has given through individual's initiative and His grace, he should enjoy and live a fully satisfied life, but cutting of hair, smoking, adultery and

unclean mind and body are strictly prohibited. This attitude will definitely ensure his growth in all areas of life and will enable him to compete with full confidence. It is one reason that Sikhs are open-minded people. They greet everyone with a smile and open arms, overcome the difficulties and calamities with courage and do progress in life. It is their duty to provide protection to the oppressed, food to the hungry and help in one's spiritual and temporal growth. On every occasion, even in battle-field, a Sikh is supposed to face with arms in hands and name of God in his mind. There is a couplet in Guru Nanak *bani* which stands as a touch-stone for determining the extent of convergence of spiritual and temporal life in Sikhism. This portion of Bani says, "Only those who eat what they have earned through honest and hard labour, save a part of it to share with the needy, can find the real way to liberation".¹⁴

Thus spirituality is linked with the most concrete form of temporality.

Throughout his *bani*, Guru Nanak has referred again and again to the temporal needs of an individual and society and has advised for their reasonable fulfilment. He is of the opinion that eating, dressing and remaining active is must for a living being. "Eating and drinking (water) is pure. God has given it in abundance,"¹⁵ is the conviction of Guru Nanak. He does not stop at this only. He begs from God for his people, "Let the rivers be the cows, hills be of milk and ghee (clarified butter), let the whole earth be sakar (unclarified sugar) and everyone, every day enjoy it and be happy."¹⁶ Wherever the advice he had for his followers, he would advise them to work hard. Everyone should apply his full mind and body to the work, whether one is ploughing, one is trading, one is manufacturing or doing any other manual work. This emphasis on discharging the social responsibility based upon Guru Nanak's temporal concerns, later on found a proverbial expression in the Sikh society, linking with them the spiritual concern also. The entire body of principles, concerning these aspects of life transformed itself into three words, inter-linking each other in spirit and practice. The three words are : Kirt karna (to do honest and hard about), Naam japna (to remember the name of God) and Wand

shakna (Eat while sharing with others). These epithets are actually house hold words in the Sikhs. This most popular expression derived from the teaching of the Guru Nanak, fairly proves how the temporal and spiritual were inseparable in the religion of Guru Nanak. The core of both the aspects of life is the same.

Guru Nanak vehemently condemned the existing spiritual and temporal order. The order which promotes distance between these two aspects of life, which compromise with the repressive rule, with the hypocrisy of social and religious life and with completely demoralised psyche, hi his *bani* he laid down certain principles which when implemented could produce an alternative order. This alternative was to re-enfranchise an individual and to re-model the individual consciousness, hi order to build a new social system, the principles which laid down for this purpose were actually the foundations of which a number of institutions were built at different stages for the same purpose by the Sikh Gurus numbering ten. The beginning of this was made by Guru Nanak himself. These institutions, like that of Sangat (Congregation), *Pangat* (sitting in a row), *Langar* (eating and serving in common kitchen), Manjis (organising the Sikh community into 22 zones), constructing Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple), compilation of Guru Granth Sahib, *meeri* - *peeri* and building of Sri Akal Takhat at Amritsar were the steps taken in the same direction. These institutions were built to bring the unseen into visible, to provide foundation for regulating the human behaviour and to sanctify worldly act by planting it into spirituality. Guru Nanak's idea of granting purity to the food and water finds a context through these institutions. Accusing the religion for justifying its temporal concerns in its meta-physical praxis does not apply to the religion of Guru Nanak.

Guru Nanak and Babar (the first Mughal ruler of India) confronted each other in Punjab in the year 1526 A.D., when Babar, as an invader, was marching towards Delhi. On the way, he was defeating the local rulers one by one. He was committing horrifying atrocities on the people. They were massacred indiscriminately. Their homes were razed to ground, their fields were put on fire, their women were molested and children were killed. Those who were supposed to protect them were busy in women

and wine "By indulging in luxury, the kings have lost their sense".¹⁷

Guru Nanak came forward, confronted Babar and told him not to act against the will of God. Babar accepted his advise and a reconciliation took place between the two. This spirit of mutual understanding between the house of Guru Nanak and that of Babar continued till Jahangir, the great grandson of Babar, occupied the Mughal throne at Delhi. Guru Nanak's throne was occupied by Guru Arjun, the fifth Guru of Sikhs, at Amritsar. Jahangir, contrary to his predecessor's policy, opted for a policy of repression for the non-Muslims. He enacted many laws and passed many orders to discriminate their subjects on the ground of religion, to demoralise them psychologically and push them to the standard of animal living. The cowards, the timid, the meek wilfully submitted before this repression. Guru Arjun refused to submit. He raised his voice against this brutal and continuous violation of human dignity. This led to his martyrdom at Lahore in the year 1606 A.D. The Sikh chronicles record that during the last days of Guru Arjun, he contemplated on the contemporary situation. He called for his confidants and told them that in order to face this onslaught after him, no alternative was left but to take up the arms. Therefore, when Guru Hargobind succeeded to the throne he had two grounds to stand upon, one the commitment of Guru Nanak given to the most oppressed in the society. This commitment was in the words:

There are people who are oppressed among the oppressed.

There are people who are still more oppressed. Saith

Nanak : I am one with them and have no relation with (so called) big people.¹⁸

Second the advice of his father regarding raising of arms. He Wore two swords, *of meeri - peeri*. Thus the institution conceived by Guru Nanak was given a historical identity. Not only the conceptual frame-work was provided by Guru Nanak even the words were provided by him. He says :

A large number of peers (spiritual leaders) were there,

but they kept mum, when they heard that meer (Babar) has invaded.¹⁹

Thus it is Guru Nanak's dream which found a manifestation in the form of convergence of *meeri -peeri*. Convergence, in fact, became the guiding principle of the future growth of the Khalsa panth that is Sikhism.

Many scholars, particularly Westerners and their students are very fond of giving external meaning to the reality. They are excited to the extent that they have given very funny formulation in this regard. They are of the opinion that Guru Hargobind's taking up arms was due to the pressure exercised by a group of new entrants, particularly Jats, into the fold of Sikhism. As if they could not resist fighting, therefore, in order to keep them in his Panth, Guru Hargobind took up arms and fought battles against Mughals. There cannot be an argument more childish than this, because :

1. Ideological commitments, throughout the Sikh struggle remained unchanged. These commitments, bound Guru Hargobind Sahib and Guru Gobind Singh to take up the arms.
2. Sikhism does not believe in caste-system. It does not hold that someone is different in status because of his birth.
3. Even before Guru Hargobind Sahib the Jats were a part of the Sikh movement. Like other communities, including Muslims, Jats joined the fold of Guru Nanak and they continued to participate in its growth. Their entry into the movement did not happen only during the period of Guru Hargobind Sahib.
4. The list of the Sikhs given by Janam Sakhis, by Bhai Gurdas and of the generals of Guru Hargobind Sahib proves contrary to the above said assertion.

Thus, both the internal as well as external evidence proves that, Sikhs as a whole can claim their contribution in this struggle, which started with Guru Nanak and is continuing till today.

Moreover, the basic issues of bringing a change in the system remained the same. The basic weapon that is morality also continued to be the same. Alongwith this weapon, another weapon was added to this basic weapon only when the character of the external reality changed. It was the challenge of the situation which

used to decide about the addition of the weapon.

Thus with the convergence of the two, both became stronger. Spirituality was supported by service, resulting into self-sufficiency, hard-labour, self-dignity etc. Begging was no more a compulsion for the spiritual man. Similarly temporal was grounded in spirituality. It was no more considered a hindrance in the path of salvation. Spiritual started participating in the temporal. So much so even the *Nil Nem*, spiritual code of the Sikhs, became the part of the day-to-day functioning. A Sikh can do it while at work. Guru Hargobind Sahib while replying to a question about his spiritual mixing with the temporal said: That the wife is for keeping moral commitment intact, the wealth is for a noble living and son is for leaving behind an imprint after death. As stated above, Guru Nanak in order to make a person fit enough to respond to the contemporary reality in a more meaningful and suitable manner released certain forces which aimed at building a new person, entirely unlike the one existing already. This was an attempt to set in the process of inner change of a person. For the completion of this process he produced nine more Nanaks. All of them implemented the programme given by Guru Nanak. For this purpose, they created a number of institutions. This was done to put the whole set of principles into practice and to participate in the evergrowing movement set in by Guru Nanak. This process of inner change found completion at the hands of Tenth Nanak that is Guru Gobind Singh, when he brought in the outer change in a person also. This fully remodeled person, a person who has consistently journeyed upward and was named Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh. Khalsa thus is a social reality from whom it is legitimate to expect a different character, a different behaviour and a different form and also armed with a different spirit to face the ongoing demands of life. Guru Hargobind's step of giving manifestation to the convergence of *meeri -peeri* was, therefore, a step in this direction.

The Khalsa, the evolved name of a Sikh, of Guru Gobind Singh known by a few epithets which clearly indicate the course which convergence of *meeri -peeri* took after Guru Hargobind. In

person. These are Badshah Darvesh (king and saint) and Sant Sipoy (Saint and Soldier) which means every Sikh is a king, may be without kingdom, a born sovereign and a saint at the same time. The spiritual sovereignty of a person is unsustainable unless it is supplemented by temporal strength. Similarly, a Sikh is a saint and soldier at the same time. He is expected to be strong like a soldier[^] and disciplined like a saint. Again a combination of the spirit and temporal in order to reflect 'the perfection in action'. Such character has to be upheld by the inexhaustible support of *Bhagti* (devotion) and *Shakti* (strength) which Guru Nanak envisaged for a Sikh in order to prepare him to face the hazardous conditions in life. Guru Gobind Singh gave the appropriate test and expression to it. *Deg* (food cooker) and *Teg* (sword) is another phrase given by Guru Gobind Singh to express the combination of human marshal qualities in a person. He must use his sword in defence of the oppressed or for the protection of the human dignity and provide food to the hungry. In other words Guru Sahib is of the conviction that a hungry person cannot function properly. Therefore, for the desired strength of a marshal, there has to be adequate food for proper nourishment. This strength combined with spiritual one is the real answer to the disaster which the tormented world is facing, even today. Another combination is that of Shaastra (Scriptures) and Shastra (weapon). This combination is to ensure a proper upbringing of an individual, the person of a Khalsa. Weapon alone is blind. It kills indiscriminately. Therefore, it must be governed by the prescription of the scripture. Some of the prominent prescriptions, given in the scriptures of the Sikhs, in this regard are :

1. A person/enemy un-armed or unequal in strength or arms must not be attacked.
2. It is the duty of the strong to make the opponent equal in strength, even to the extent of arming him before challenging him for a battle.
3. Women, children, fleeing and aged persons should not be made the target.
4. Except those fighting in the actual battle field none should be harmed.

The institution of *meeri - peeri*, therefore, is neither a subject for theoretical discussion nor to be used as a medium of expression only. It is a living reality. The foundation of this institution was laid down by Guru Nanak. As a historical reality, it was organised by Guru Hargobind and was perfected by Guru Gobind Singh. Thus the *Sachiar* (one who lives a truthful living) of Guru Nanak after passing through this process became the sant-sepoy of Guru Gobind Singh.

Honestly speaking, today we are living in a world which is completely fragmented, morally and physically both. The humanity has lost its base. This fragmentation, coupled with crime and violence particularly against poor and women, is increasingly becoming a threat for the modern civilisation. Unfortunately, sometimes, even the state which is created only for protection is resorting to this kind of method for perpetuating the power in hand and adding more to it. Thus, this lust for more is eating into the vitals of modern society. In order to save mis, from a number of maladies like ecological disturbance, nuclear disaster, population explosion, imbalance, inequality etc., we must try at creating a universally acceptable moral discipline. We must try to provide a spiritual ground, a moral perspective to the humanity for its rightly directed growth. The institution of *meeri - peeri* thus can be an effective answer to this malady.

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INDEX

A

Adi Granth, Study on, 56-70
 Akal Takht, 90-97
 Amar Das, Guru, 45-46, 51, 64, 67, 115
 Amrit, concept of, 120
 anecdote 49,
 Angad, Guru, 64, 88
 Angad, Guru 64, 88
 Aristotle, 129
 Arjun Dev, Guru 3, 5, 15, 17, 34, 40, 56-57, 79, 88, 113, 116, 118, 141
 Asa Di var, 36
 Assessment of Sikhism, 1-53
 Aurangzeb, 75

B

Babar, 15, 23, 94, 140-141
 bad sikh, 50
 Banda Singh Bahadur, 52, 76, 85-86
 borrowed institution, 45-46
 Brown, Schuyler, 69
 Budha, Baba, 17, 57-58, 84

C

Cast and, 32-35
 Central place of Sikhism, 115-16
 Choupa Singh, Bhai, 5

Construction of Religious Boundries, study on, 71-89

D

Dalip Singh, 45
 Darshan Singh, 12
 Daswandh, Institution of, 119
 Daya Singh, Bhai, 5, 31
 Dhillon, G.S., 89
 Diversity, issue of, 108-15
 doctrine issues, 98-115

F

Farid, Sheikh, 63, 129
 Febvre, Lucin, 71
 fundamental principles for a sikh as,
 an individual, 10-11
 member of corporate body 11-32

G

Gobind Singh, Guru, 22, 25-30, 32, 40-43, 48-49, 51-52, 59, 62-63, 76-77, 80, 83-84, 92, 94, 98, 102, 111, 117-18, 120, 122-23, 135, 142-43, 145
 Grewal, j.S., 28, 46, 85, 89
 Gurbani, 33, 40
 Gurdas, Bhai., 5, 17, 23, 58, 65, 79, 94, 113, 142
 Gurditta, Baba, 83

Guru Granth Sahib, **98,116-18**, 129-30,140
 Gurmata,42
 GuruPanth, 41
 Guru word, 40-41

H

Hargobind, Guru, 16-19,21-25, 29,51,62,64-65,77,83,91, 94,102,115,127, 141-43, 145
 Hans, S.S., 86

Human rights, fundamental Principles, of 106-08

I

Indian Bhakti Movement, 100
 institutions, 98-115

J

Jahangir, 15.20,23,28,91,94, 141

K

Kabir, 63, 68
 Kahan Singh, Bhai, 85, 124

L

Langar, institution of, 45-46, 119-20
 life perception in, 127-45

M

Manji System, 51
 Manu Meer,76
 masand and khalsa order, 48
 Meeri (temporal), concept of, 127-45

Mohammad, Shah, 38, 48
 Mohri, Baba, 64
 Murty, K. Satchidananda, 98

N

Namdev, 63
 Nanak, Guru, 1-10, 12-20, 23-26,28-34,36,40-43,45-47, 51,57-61,63,65-67,75-81, 84,87-88,90,92-93,98-110, 112-125,128-45
 Nand Lal, Bhai, 27, 31, 124
 Nietzsche, 86

O

Oberoi, Harjot Singh, Study on work of, 71-89

P

Pahul rejection, 46-47, 50
 Pangat (row), institution of, 119-20
 Panj Pyaras (Five beloved ones), 123
 Pashaura Singh, 56-70
 Patit, 43-44, 50
 Peeri (spiritual), concept of, 127-45
 Pratap, Maharana, 83
 R
 Ram Das, Guru, 15,33,63
 Ranjit Singh, 31, 37-42, 86
 Ravidas, 63

S

SGPC, 93
 Sachiar, Concept of, 121-22
 Sahans Ram Bana, 57

Sahib Singh, 66, 68
Sahni Ruchi Ram, 73
Sahajdhari, 42-43
Saint-Soldier, Concept, 122
Sangat, institution of, 119,
113-37
Senapati, 82
Service, concept of 123-25
Shah, Nadir, 5
Sikh Polity, Irresponsible state
ments on, 90-97
Sikh as a quam, 44-45
Sikhism,
5 Ks, 47, 78
Singh Sabha Movement, 47-
48, 80, 82, 85

Sri Chand, Baba, 83
Sri Guru Granth Sahib Darpan,
66
Stephen, James, 67
Succession theory, 48-49

T

Taran Singh, 67
Teg Bahadur, Guru, 29,61,63,
75,77 Turner, Victor, 71

W

Women, status of, 35-36,
111-13